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MILDRED BOIE

AUTUMN, 1938

POET LORE

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TRANSLATORS' NOTE

Julius Zeyer (1841 - 1901) occupies a distinguished position among the writers of Bohemia during the second half of the nineteenth century. His copious works are partly in verse, partly in prose. A romantic by nature and cosmopolitan in his tastes, he chose his subjects from the tales and legends of many lands, from Italy and France to China and Japan. The drama here translated is based on the Irish saga, *The Pursuit after Diarmuid O'Duibhne and Grainne,* but Zeyer handles his material with great freedom, changing the story and adding to it according to his own fancy. His title for the drama is *A Legend of Erin.*

In the present translation the Irish names have been spelled as they are in *The Pursuit after Diarmuid O'Duibhne and Grainne,* edited by Standish Hayes O'Grady (Dublin, Ossianic Society, 1857), except that, in conformity with general usage, *Fionn* and *Oisin* have been changed into *Finn* and *Ossian. Diarmuid O'Duibhne, Grainne* and *Daire* are pronounced, approximately (notation as in *Webster's International Dictionary*), Deermid O'Dinna, Grä'nya (two syllables) and Därа.

The translators are indebted to the Bohemian Academy of Arts and Sciences for their courteous permission to publish this drama.

DIARMUID AND GRAINNE

A Drama in Four Acts

By Julius Zeyer

Authorized Translation from the Bohemian
By George Rapall Noyes *and* Vera Mezirka

Characters

Cormac, *King of Erin.*
Grainne, *his daughter.*
Finn, *King of the Fenians.*
Ossian, *his son.*
Oscar, *son of* Ossian.
Diarmuid O'Duibhne.
Midac.
Daire, *a Druid.*
A herald of the court of King Cormac.
Bodyguards of both kings.
Grainne's *maidens.*
Bards.

The action takes place in Pagan Ireland of the third century A. D.

ACT I

Tara. A spot overgrown with ancient oaks in front of the palace, the heavy barbaric outlines of which rise in the background. On one side is a large tower, part of timber, part of heavy masonry. A low bastion, not concealed by the trees, connects the tower with the palace and supports an open, roofed passageway with rudely hewn wooden pillars. The gate to the castle is open. The day is drawing to a close and the stage is flooded with evening light.

Scene I

King Cormac *sits on a stone bench under an old oak in the extreme foreground, lost in thought. In the background near the gate are several members of the royal bodyguard.* Daire *is just coming through the gate.*

Cormac (*to himself*). There are no tidings of him!

Daire (*steps up.*) My lord, you called me.

CORMAC (*not hearing him.*) A whole month has passed! (*He catches sight of* DAIRE.) Druid!

DAIRE. I have been standing before you for some time, but you have not seen me.

CORMAC. I am tortured by anxiety. What has happened to my son? A month ago he left Tara with some friends, promising to return soon. You see how he has kept his promise. He is as wild as a mountain torrent; I am always alarmed when he is out of sight and I cannot watch over him.

DAIRE. King, marvel not that he tarries long. Angus, his host, knows many secrets of nature, and his gray, moss-covered house is full of wonders. And his forests swarm with the most rare animals. How enticing the chase is there, and what fishing there is in his blue lake!

CORMAC. True, Daire. You have dispelled my gloom. Sit down. (*He looks around.*) The evening is so peaceful. Look, the sun hesitates; it is reluctant to set; it grieves to take leave of the blue heights. Daire, Daire, soon I too shall take leave of them. I am old and weary, and already I would gladly slumber beneath a grassy barrow — but, when I think of Erin and of my children, I am ill at ease. How wild is Cairbre, my only son, and what manner of king will he be! And Grainne! What is in store for her, my poor daughter?

DAIRE. Your gloom, king, is not yet dispelled. You are torturing yourself. It is true that Cairbre is wild, but do not despair because of this; he is young, and heroic blood flows strongly in his veins. In time he will be just as wise as yourself. And Grainne, you will see, will recover. Her mind seems to me to have become brighter during the few days since I saw her last, and I have looked for healing herbs for her in the forest. Be patient.

CORMAC. You calm me, and the calmness of evening is like a soothing draught. Your words penetrate my soul as does the evening's sparkling smile. I wish now to forget the future; rather will I call to mind the days of the past. For this reason I bade them call you. Your memory, druid, is like a golden tablet on which I carve a picture of the past. My simple strokes acquire splendor from your genius; from your lips flows a song of magic charm; the ears of those in-

spired by you drink it in with eagerness, and songs are thus handed down from father to son.

DAIRE. I have two tablets — my memory and my heart. On the first I engrave sayings that fall like jewels from the mouths of old men. On the other, on the crimson tablet of my heart, I engrave beautiful deeds, the great acts of men now living, and your memory is the source whence I draw them.

CORMAC. From their acts you frame songs at which the hearts of our remotest descendants will beat proudly. You are building a mighty castle — I am handing you the stones for it.

DAIRE. Those are always beautiful moments for me, when, as you say, you give me material wherewith to build. On which of the two tablets do you wish me to engrave today? On the crimson tablet of my heart?

CORMAC. Engrave there the word *Finn.*

DAIRE. Finn?

CORMAC. A more faithful friend I have never had in my life, and the small cloud that has come between us shall not dim the glowing picture of the friend of my youth. Not between him and me occurred dissension and coolness at the last festival here; they arose solely between his people and mine. What fault is it of his that the heroic Fenians, and especially Diarmuid, were victorious in combat with the champions of Tara? That Ossian, his son, gained the wreath of the bards, and that he surpassed all in singing, even yourself?

DAIRE. You know, king, that I admired him more than did all the rest.

CORMAC. You are free from petty jealousies; that I know. So now engrave on your heart the word *Finn,* and listen.

DAIRE. I strain my attention and my thoughts.

CORMAC. Although every child in Erin calls Finn "King of the beneficent hand", very few know why they call him so. Many a false report circulates of how the miracle happened that gave his palm such magic power, and they even speak falsely of what that power is. I alone have heard the simple

truth from the mouth of Finn, and today for the first time I share it with a living soul. Heed then my words.

DAIRE. O king, a more eager listener you will never find.

CORMAC. Finn was still young, and at that time he wandered over Erin and performed great deeds. Giants, doers of evil, he cut down like oaks in the forest, and he dried the tears of sufferers. Once on a warm night he chanced to wander into desolate mountains. The moon was shining and a lake gleamed blue among the cliffs. Along with the splashing of the waves there came to his ears the moaning of a sweet voice. He looked about and saw close by the water a dark cave, overgrown with blossoming hawthorn, and at its entrance stood a girl, marvelously beautiful, wringing her hands. Her blond hair was flowing in the wind and she was weeping.

DAIRE. Almost can I see the poor girl standing there, radiant in the dark shade of the cave.

CORMAC. Finn called out with astonishment: "Are you a mortal or an apparition from on high? Why do you moan?" — "Alas, I am no mortal," she answered, sobbing. "If I could but die! Not far from the shores of Erin, on a place where the waters seethe eternally, a cliff towers toward heaven, steep as a column. Since the beginning of the world man has not set foot thereon, nor shall he till the world end. On this cliff lives a solitary, white bird. You have heard of it, for every mariner tells how its plaintive song mingles with the roar of the ocean billows. Lo, that bird am I."

DAIRE. Ah, there is no fireside in Erin where in the long winter evenings, tales are not told of that cliff and of the bird with human voice that dwells thereon. Once in my boat I myself heard its sad call from afar.

CORMAC. At that time Finn talked with her, and thus spake she further to him: "Yet my cruel fate has granted me this much, that I may fly to Erin from time to time and reveal myself in my original form. That was a consolation; yet, alas, even that has become fatal to me! A year ago I flew to this shore; here under the hawthorn a young hero was sleeping. I gazed at him, and fierce love took possession of me. I bent over him. He awoke — and love entered his heart from my gaze and struck him like a thunderbolt. This

cave was our world. Often we saw each other here. A whole year passed happily for us. Yesterday ended our dream of love and of bliss. He had a friend, who from loneliness had been pining for him. He looked for him and he found him here. Ah, but he saw me too, and he was inflamed with destructive passion. Yesterday they battled here for me. He whom I love lies pale and dead in the lake below. I buried him there. While I was wringing my hands in despair, my ring fell into the depths of these waters. It lies there, drowned like my happiness. Without the ring I cannot return to the lonely island. And for this reason I moan and lament."

DAIRE. And did she not wish to live eternally by the lake which was the crystal tomb of her dead lover?

CORMAC. Finn also asked that, and she answered with a sigh: "On the island to which fate has fettered me, sleeps in a nest of lilies and violets my babe, his son! He is languishing, dying in that wilderness without me. Oh, immeasurable torture! I cannot go back to him!"

DAIRE. Alas!

CORMAC. Then Finn plunged into the blue waters, into whose depths the moon was pouring her silver, and down in the tangle of pale, gigantic weeds he saw the hero lying. On the heart of the dead man something burned like a crimson spark; it was a precious stone set in a ring. Finn seized the ring and rose from the waves. He handed the ring to the weeping woman and she said: "I know an incantation so powerful that with it I could break the earth in two and shake the heavens until the stars showered down from them. Against fate alone am I weak as a child. What death is to you, fate is to us — a lurking darkness. You have given back life to my child. I wish to show my gratitude." So speaking, she pressed his hand to her lips, and continued: "This is your reward; it is as great as is within my power. Know that from the instant when your right hand felt my kiss it became beneficent and wonder-working. If you take water from a well into the palm of your hand, and if you offer it even to a dying man, you will instantly heal him."

DAIRE. Ah, what a gift! Oh, the thrice-fortunate Finn!

CORMAC. Finn gave thanks, and as the girl took her

leave of him, she added: "Good fortune go with you! Yet guard yourself against harshness. My gift may become a curse to you. If you ever refuse help to anyone, the beneficent power will pass from your hand, and your fate will be darkened." So speaking she put the ring into her mouth and in an instant was changed into a white bird, which circled around on powerful wings in the flood of moonlight and then disappeared. It flew to the island, where it still abides and where sailors see it from afar, sitting on the cliff. Its plaintive song still mingles constantly with the roar of the seething waters. But King Finn became a hero doubly great. He knows victory as before, transgressors he cuts down as mayhap no man else; but he is like the very gods in this, that from his hand, just as from their hands, springs life.

DAIRE. Have you made an end?

CORMAC. I have. But, druid, put now into song what I have confided to you; a gift to future generations. When a bard clothes the truth in a beautiful garb, only then does the truth glow with full strength and shine before all like a star of the heavens. I have finished, and I believe just in time; for lo, the herald draws near.

HERALD (*coming in.*) Pardon, O king. A strange man has come and would speak with you. But we forbade him.

CORMAC. You should not have done so! Guests are messengers from the gods. Lead him hither.

The HERALD *goes out.*

DAIRE. Mayhap he brings news.

CORMAC. From my son, think you? May you be right!

SCENE II

The same and MIDAC.

MIDAC. Long may you live, O king!

CORMAC. Welcome to Tara!

MIDAC. I thank you.

CORMAC. Draw near. Whence come you?

MIDAC. From the sea.

DAIRE. Then not from the forest, from the home of Angus, as I had hoped?

MIDAC. Nay, from the sea.

CORMAC. And who are you?

MIDAC. Allow me to conceal that, sire, for a short time at least.

CORMAC. Well, though unknown, nevertheless be welcome. You are my guest; be it according to your own will.

MIDAC. Reports of you do not lie! You are great and good.

CORMAC. You flatter me. However, pray sit down; you are weary . . . Give our guests to drink.

MIDAC. (*Seats himself at some distance from* CORMAC.) I am weary, but I forget my fatigue in my eagerness to talk with you.

CORMAC. I listen.

MIDAC. Tara from sea to sea is called the star of Erin; and you, sire, are called the star of Tara. I come seeking your wisdom, king. Be my adviser.

CORMAC. I am old and I have experience, that is all my wisdom. What has brought you to me?

MIDAC. Two things. One thing I ask you for: counsel. The other I will give you: a message. With which shall I begin?

CORMAC. Whichever weighs the more heavily upon you, free yourself of that first.

MIDAC. Then first I ask counsel. Listen. My father fell by a murderous hand. What shall I do?

CORMAC. This question is answered by the custom handed down from our forefathers. Either revenge his death, or ask that they pay for his head. You yourself have the right to fix the price.

MIDAC. Yet I know not who killed my father. I was a mere child when he perished wretchedly.

CORMAC. And have you sought to find the murderer?

MIDAC. I have put that off until now. So you advise me to seek for him.

CORMAC. That certainly is your duty.

MIDAC. Then help me find him. In brief, king, I think that perchance you alone know who is the secret criminal. Yet I fear that you will not tell the truth! Or will you promise to do so?

CORMAC. Otherwise than truthfully, I could not speak and there is no need that I make a special promise. But why do you think that I know of the evil doer?

MIDAC. (*Rises.*) I am Midac, son of King Colga, from Lochlann.*

CORMAC. Midac! Your father sailed hither with an army from Lochlann in order to lay on our necks the yoke of foreign supremacy. He asked heavy tribute. We defended ourselves, and your father was overpowered and fell in battle. Who slew him I know not. That, however, was not murder.

MIDAC. But I know that it was murder. To overcome King Colga in combat would have been a famous deed. Why did the victor not proclaim his fame?

CORMAC. That is a riddle I cannot solve. My thought is that the victor may have perished too, slain in the battle.

MIDAC. Do you speak the truth? Are you concealing nothing? Know you no more?

CORMAC. I give you my word as a king, if my word as a man does not suffice you.

MIDAC. Your word is holy to me. Then the only thing left me to do is to search for the murderer, and to take bloody vengeance! My every heartbeat, my every thought, my whole soul, I dedicate to my great revenge. From this day on I live and breathe only to repay murder with murder.

CORMAC. Ah, eternal, hereditary hatred! How monstrous is thy face! Will there never be an end to thee! In my youth I used often to hear the druids speak thus in the dark oak groves: "Three things grow continuously: light, truth, and life. So darkness, error, and death diminish. As long as the earth endures so long will love, knowledge, and justice increase." . . . But lo, a whole age has passed, and yet the time of light and love has not come one step nearer to us!

MIDAC. O King, does not hate spring from love itself? Love for my father forces a knife into my hand, and drives me to hatred.

CORMAC. Erin is your second fatherland; King Finn

*The land of the Norsemen.

is like your father. Why can you not forget? Live in peace and in calm.

MIDAC. Sire, for this reason I refused to reveal my name to you, that you might the more easily point out to me the path of my duty. You did so; you told me that I should search for the murderer, and wreak vengeance on him. Now you withdraw your words.

CORMAC. I told you what was the custom — not what my heart spoke. And if your heart did not whisper the same counsel, why then have you hesitated until now? And how shall you recognize the murderer?

MIDAC. I shall recognize him from a certain sign. That is my secret. Why have I delayed? I was trying to conquer a painful suspicion.

CORMAC. You have a suspicion?

MIDAC. I have a foreboding — a gloomy foreboding. You said that Finn was like a father to me. When King Colga perished and his warriors fled from Erin, Finn adopted me, a child. I lived in his house as one of his own. In time I forgot that my true fatherland lay beyond the sea. But when I was no longer a child, when I became a youth, a man, then there gradually awoke within me something like hatred for the men among whom I had grown up. I began to feel like a stranger; and once, when at a great feast in Allen, a bard sang of the defeat of King Colga, ah! then my heart threatened to burst, and for the first time I cried: "Revenge! revenge!"

CORMAC. I understand your feeling — unfortunate man.

MIDAC. You do not understand the full weight of my unhappiness. Know, then, that my suspicion fell upon Finn — whom nevertheless I have to thank for everything!

CORMAC. No, no! King Finn, and murder!

MIDAC. So I too exclaimed, but still the storm in my soul did not subside. I said to myself: "All that he did for me then was merely in atonement for a grievous wrong." . . . I could love him no longer. I avoided him, I avoided all men. . . . At that time he built me a great house in Kerry, and generously gave me beautiful armor and vast herds. Yet the more he gave the more apparent to my soul seemed his guilt. I left that house and the great riches that he

forced upon me. I fled to the deserted cliffs on the seashore. I hoped that there I should find peace — alone and poor.

CORMAC. And did you not?

MIDAC. King, I did not! My father's shade flew after me into the solitudes. With horrifying shouts he stirred me from sleep, and every look of his was a terrible reproach. In the night time I promised him vengeance, but when the sun arose I wept from weakness. That eternal struggle obscured my thoughts. I could no longer judge clearly. You were my last hope. In your hands I placed my decision. By your first words you stirred me to revenge — then your heart spoke otherwise. You have given me no consolation. Tell me: If, disregarding the sacred customs of our ancestors, I guide myself by your heart, how then shall I secure calm for my soul? How shall I drive away the suspicion that eternally forces itself upon me? How shall I appease the unrevenged shade of my father? Ah, from these riddles there is no escape! I shall be haunted by them all my life.

CORMAC. You have done well to come to me — I will lead you out of the dark labyrinth of doubts. Let the gods themselves decide this matter. Search carefully and coldly, with no surmises or prejudices, for the sign whereby, as you say, you can recognize the murderer. Today the moon in the blue sky is a silver crescent; before it fills out into a golden shield, return to Tara, and if you have not by that time found the murderer — I will then take the sin of my people on myself. My hand is free from blood — and easy will be the reconciliation between us. I will pay you for the head a great, immeasurable price, worthy of the memory of King Colga. In this way shall I return peace to both of you, to yourself on earth, and to him under the barrow.

MIDAC. Ah, I could shout for joy. (*He kneels.*) My king, I thank you. You are my saviour. I submit to your judgment.—Hear me, ye gods; hear me, shade of my father, I summon you solemnly. If you desire the blood of my enemy, the blood of that murderer — then drive him into my hands, just as a hunter drives a wild beast. King, before the time is up I will return, and you will pay for the head. Give what you yourself think fit. However, permit me now to kiss your magnanimous hands.

CORMAC. (*Kisses him on the forehead.*) Here is the kiss of peace. I give it to you for all Erin. (*They embrace.*)

DAIRE. O beautiful moment, flee not! Peace breathes from heaven, it rises from the earth like fragrant smoke. But who with swift steps draws near to disturb us?

CORMAC. The castle herald.

HERALD. (*Steps up quickly.*) My king, pardon, again I disturb you —

CORMAC. Speak!

HERALD. We were standing on the slope above the river. There on the other shore we saw riders galloping. Mounted on white horses, they rode out of the oak forest in armor shining like gold. We hurried toward them across the ford, and when we came up to them, we recognized Ossian, Oscar, his son, and Diarmuid, the hero. Ossian said to us that he was coming as the messenger of King Finn and he commanded that we make known his arrival to you.

MIDAC. Messengers of King Finn! They are here already, and I have not yet given you my message.

CORMAC. (*To the herald.*) Ride back quickly. I await their arrival with joy. (*Calling to the rear.*) Up! Welcome the messengers of King Finn! (*The herald and the bodyguard of the king hurry away.*) Well, what message do you bring me, Midac, and from whom?

MIDAC. Not a joyous one. Cairbre, your son, has grievously broken the peace with King Finn.

CORMAC. You are mistaken! He is staying at the house of Angus, in the forest.

MIDAC. He was staying there. But he committed a mad act. In the absence of his host, he invited King Finn, who was hunting in the forest near by, to the home of the druid Angus. When Finn was sitting at the table with his friends and drinking, Cairbre locked the doors and swept fire upon the roof and into the hall. Without the unexpected aid of Diarmuid, Finn would surely have perished!

CORMAC. Alas! What moved my son to such a crime?

MIDAC. Jealousy still burned within him over the last festival in Tara. Finn and his heroes, they say, gained the victory in the games and in combat — and this weighed heavily upon him.

Cormac. Mad boy! And did he fall into the hands of King Finn?

Midac. No. He saved himself by fleeing to the seashore. There I met him. There he asked me to bring news to you of what had happened. I hid him in my cave. On that day it happened that a ship put in to take on a supply of water. It was the ship that you sent out against the robbers of Fomor. Cairbre swam out to it and promised that he would wipe out by a worthy deed the stain of that wild enterprise against Finn.

Cormac. Ah, Finn is terrible, as consuming as a tempest in his anger! Tara, his messengers are riding to your gate — your sweet peace is nearing its end!

Daire. My king, the messengers are already here.

Herald. The messengers of King Finn!

Scene III

The same. Ossian, Oscar, Diarmuid *and the bodyguard of* King Cormac.

Ossian. Hail, O king!

Diarmuid. Glory be to you!

Oscar. And success to your house!

Cormac. I welcome you, and with me all Tara welcomes you.

Ossian. As messengers we stand before you. King Finn speaks through us.

Cormac. Whatever word Finn sends, whether you bring me peace or war, you are my guests, and to me your heads are sacred. Enter, then. I will prepare a feast for you in my house; a swarm of servants awaits your beckoning, and sweet will be your rest after your long journey.

Ossian. I thank you, king. But allow me to speak without delay.

Cormac. I know what you wish to say.— My son — my Cairbre — has committed an act — you wish war.

Ossian. King, you are mistaken. My father, from his love for you, will forgive him.

Cormac. My friend, my Finn! Well, then, tell me: What word does he send?

Ossian. After our return from the house of Angus to the castle of Allen we held a great hunt. At daybreak I left the house and lo, my father was already sitting on the hillside and was gazing sadly toward the forest. He was pale, the wind played with his white hair, and his eyes, dark as a moonless night, were mournful unto death. The majesty and the grief of his bearing moved us deeply, myself, Diarmuid, and my son. Quietly we approached him. I nodded to Diarmuid, whom Finn so dearly loves. Diarmuid has a voice that always finds its way into the soul, and for this reason I wanted him to speak with him first.

Diarmuid. I bent over the old man as he sat and said: "You are weighed down by deep grief. What troubles you?" He raised his head, was silent a moment, and then replied: "My hall is empty and deserted, it is empty even when it resounds with the songs of numerous guests. For the golden border of my wife's white robes no longer makes a stir beneath the vaulted roof by its quiet rustling. The funeral urn holds the dust of her who grew old with me. Why does not the very fire on the hearth grow cold since it no longer throws on the wall shadows of my dear ones?"

Ossian. Much moved, I grasped his hand and said to him: "If your soul yearns for a wife, why did you not speak long ago? As far as the sea curves around Erin there is no maiden who would not have raised her head proudly and joyfully, hearing that you had chosen her for yourself!"

Oscar. A smile passed over his sad face, as when the sun sails out from under a cloud, and I cried out joyously: "I am still young and glory is still a vague dream for me. O king, whose blood, grown young, circles in my veins, let me perform a great deed! Say what maiden you desire and I will bring her to you, even if I have to do mortal combat for her."

Ossian. Finn smiled at these hasty words and fixed his gaze on Diarmuid, addressing him thus: "On your honor as a hero, answer me truly: What daughter of Erin seems most beautiful to your sight?"

Diarmuid. To this I could answer only the pure truth: "The sight of but one maiden fills every soul with radiance. She is called Grainne. She is as lovely as a star above the

forest, and happy is Tara that she abides there."

Ossian. At that Finn cried out: "I am of the same mind as yourself. Indeed, like a young birch, shining in the sun, Grainne stands by the granite throne of her father. Up, then, ride to Tara where the King of Erin sits on his throne in glory and speak to him thus: 'Finn asks for your daughter as his wife! Peace be between your people and mine, and let us forget our mutual wrongs!' " (*Silence.*) Why, king, do you sit silent? Why do you turn your face away? Why do you cover it with your robe? Have I grieved you?

Cormac. Not you, but fate.

Ossian. Yet it is not clear what you mean by that. This much, however, is evident to me, that you do not agree.

Cormac. You are mistaken. How gladly would I cry out: "Let Finn come!" And all Tara with me would shout for joy! But my child no longer lives —

Diarmuid. Ah, murderous world!

Ossian. Your daughter is dead?

Cormac. She still walks this earth and breathes, but the gods have taken away her soul. She seems crushed by some unknown grief: she gazes into the void; sometimes she smiles but that smile awakens sorrow more than would tears. Sometimes she speaks sweetly a soft word, as when a child prattles, but its meaning remains hidden from us. A slumber deep as the grave has seized upon her soul.

Ossian. Has she long been so afflicted?

Cormac. Since the last festival here, which proved so fatal to my family. On the day when you were contending in the meadow on the sunny side of the house, Grainne went out on the balcony and watched you. Suddenly, in the midst of her childish delight she turned pale; a deep sigh rose from her bosom and she covered her eyes with her palms. Since that day she has been ill.

Ossian. And have you not sought help?

Cormac. I have sought it, but have not found it. Does my son guess aright in seeking the cause of her illness in an evil spell that some one of the men of Allen cast upon my poor child? That suspicion was the beginning of his hostility toward you. Ah, now my grief is twofold, for Finn perchance will not believe in the truth of my words. Come

then with me; talk with Grainne yourselves. Let it be as the gods decree. (*He turns toward the house; the sound of a harp is heard.*)

Daire. Stay, O King. Grainne is approaching; the sound of the harp goes before her. I know the delight of her afflicted mind. Every evening she picks a lapful of flowers, then she climbs to the tower and waits there until the evening star comes forth. When she has greeted it with her vacant smile, she bows her head, sighing deeply, and slowly betakes herself to her bed. Her maidens accompany her and soothe her secret grief with the playing of harps. They are here now in the passageway.

In the passageway on the bastion the girls appear carrying small torches. It has become entirely dark, and the light of the torches falls on the stage. Two girls playing on harps appear, and behind them Grainne *with her head bowed low.*

Cormac. Here is my child, Ossian; speak with her.

Scene IV

The same; Grainne *in the covered passageway.*

Ossian. So sails a white cloud through the blue sky of summer.

Oscar. So grows a flower in the shade of the oak grove.

Diarmuid. So the dawn dreamily ascends the hills.

Cormac. Stay, Grainne, your father speaks with you. (*The harps cease playing*).

Grainne (*pauses and looks into space, raising her head.*)

Cormac. My beloved child, hear me. Do you wish me to be happy?

Grainne (*lowers her eyes and slowly nods her head.*)

Ossian. How her lack of speech grieves me!

Cormac. Grainne, gather together the strength of your sick soul so that you may understand! Listen. King Finn, the great hero, king of the beneficent hand, asks for you in marriage. Here stand his messengers. My lips speak for them, my heart too, and all Tara looks to you and begs you to make answer. In your hands lies the fate of Tara; peace beckons to us if you consent — if you do not consent, who

knows what the future will bring to us? Grainne, Grainne, do you understand?

(GRAINNE *stands motionless.*)

OSSIAN. How strange!

CORMAC. Grainne, earnestly I entreat you, speak; do you hear me? Look hither toward the messengers of King Finn — and greet them.

GRAINNE. (*She slowly raises her head; her gaze wanders over the stage and stops at the messengers; then she totters and cries out faintly.*) Ye gods! Ye gods!

CORMAC. Grainne, your eyes begin to shine. You are smiling! Did you understand? Do you welcome the messengers, and do you accept their message?

GRAINNE. (*Turning her face heavenward.*) Ye gods!

CORMAC. Are you dazzled by the glory of this alliance? Does it thrill you? Then speak to them, if only a single word, so that they may know that your outcry meant joy.

GRAINNE. Ah! (*Bursts into tears and hides her face.*)

OSSIAN. Speak, strange child. Your sigh sounded like joy, yet now you are weeping again.

CORMAC. She is weary, as you see. Emotion checks her speech. Grainne, go to your bed. First, however, if you cannot speak, give us a sign that you are happy. Look, the messengers are waiting. (*He leads* OSSIAN *and* DIARMUID *nearer to the palace.*)

OSSIAN. May your night be sweet, sweet blessing of Tara!

(GRAINNE *steps close up to the railing.*)

DIARMUID. May you dream golden dreams!

GRAINNE. (*To herself.*) I thank you, gods. (*She leans over and drops a handful of flowers, which fall at* DIARMUID'S *feet. At this she goes away.*)

CORMAC. Oh, blessed moment! Life returns and her soul is relieved.

OSSIAN. (*Kneels.*) O King, your child has consented, and now I ask you for her in my father's name.

CORMAC. She is his.

OSSIAN. (*Opens his mantle. Wound around his arm he has a necklace.*) This necklace the king sends her as a gift. It is a marvel of art. Look, how the stones flame in the

gold! It comes from Hisberna, from the Land of the Sun, where lives a people of skilled and magical hands. You will not find another such in all Erin!

MIDAC. (*Who has been standing in the rear during the whole scene.*) That necklace! King Finn! O great gods, my foreboding.

DIARMUID. Midac! Midac here!

CORMAC. He is my guest. Midac, how pale you are! You are trembling. What means your cry?

MIDAC. Nothing, O king. In the dusk shades rise from their graves and terrify the living. Just now one of them flashed by me — a bloody vision.

CORMAC. You are unnerved. Come then to the upper room! Prepare a banquet! Let the harps sound with joy, for good fortune has come to Tara! (*They all proceed to the house.*)

OSSIAN. (*On his way.*) On the battlements of the tower I shall light a fire; on the peak, beyond the forest, my people will see it and they will kindle another pyre. So the fiery token will run from hill to hill, until Finn himself perceives it. He will come in haste, overjoyed, like a storm wind, for he awaits it according to our agreement.

DIARMUID. Her lips whispered as in a dream. Where does her soul wander? Here in this breast dwells in solitude her enchanting form. . . . Those flowers fell from her hand. (*Kisses the flowers.*)

MIDAC. How bloodily that necklace blazed before my sight! Methinks I see it constantly before me. So is this your summons, King Colga?

CORMAC. (*At the gate he looks around and calls out.*) Midac! Diarmuid!

MIDAC. I come! (*He steps up to* DIARMUID.) To the castle!

DIARMUID. Ah, what have you done, Midac? Look, that white flower of Grainne's fell from my hand and you have crushed it with your foot.

MIDAC. Is that flower so precious to you?

DIARMUID. (*Confused and bitterly.*) It does not belong to me, it is destined for Finn!

MIDAC. The gift of his bride. (*Laughs.*) But that bride perchance will soon be a widow.

DIARMUID. How strange is your laugh! What do you mean?

MIDAC. Nothing. I am thinking that Finn has already lived too long — that is, that he is very old.

(*They follow the others.*)

(*The curtain falls.*)

ACT II

A large hall called "Miodhchuarta," in Tara. Powerful columns uphold the dark, carved ceiling. The walls are hung with tapestries. The hall is made up of two sections divided by a curtain of heavy stuff hanging between columns. This curtain is now pulled aside so that it is possible to see both sections. In the rear, larger section, is a mighty stone table, on which are horns full of mead; still further back stands a group of bards with harps. In the front section, on a low platform along both sides, are oaken chairs, covered with bear skins and bright-colored tapestries. On one side are seated on chairs KING CORMAC, KING FINN, OSSIAN, OSCAR, DIARMUID, *and* MIDAC. *Near them are the bodyguards. On the other side sits* GRAINNE *in costly robes, surrounded by her maidens. It is night, both rooms are illumined with festival torches, which are fastened to the columns amid shields, weapons, heads of bison, and elk horns. In the center of the stage stands* DAIRE, *with a harp.*

SCENE I

CORMAC, FINN, OSSIAN, OSCAR, DIARMUID, MIDAC, DAIRE, *the bodyguards of the two kings,* GRAINNE *and her maidens.*

DAIRE. My song extolling your fame, O King Finn, is at an end; but your fame will know no end, it will live forever!

FINN. Like your song, Daire, sweet voice of Tara, and master of the bardic art.

CORMAC. Daire, by your words you have deeply touched us. I thank you.

FINN. (*Rises.*) And to my thanks I will add this horn set with precious stones. (*He motions and they hand him the horn, which he fills with the mead that is brought to him.*) Here, take it, singer, and drink to my health!

DAIRE. Long may you live, my Finn! (*He drinks and lays aside the horn.*)

FINN. Cormac, your house welcomes me as if I were a god, not a mortal. How fortunate I am! In my breast a new spring is born, (*pointing to* GRAINNE) and there sails the sun that performed this great miracle.

CORMAC. Let us to the table; come, you will lead in my child. She is cured, as by a miracle.

FINN. My heart beats fast, and I verily feel something like a blush burning my cheek. I feel like a youth; I am shy and timid. Laugh at me if you wish!

CORMAC. That blush on a hero's cheek is the charm which softens the severe grandeur of your countenance. Your old age is like the sacred vestment of a priest; the immortality of your name gives you eternal youth, and your shyness today makes you deserving of love. Pray lead my daughter hither.

FINN. Why has not Grainne around her neck the necklace that I sent her? A bride without her wedding gift!

CORMAC. Here it is ; I would have you place that radiant jewel upon her yourself. (*He hands him the necklace.*)

MIDAC. Oh, curses!

CORMAC. Who spake in so strange a voice so bold a word? What means it?

MIDAC. It was but an idle word. Pardon me, O King, I was thinking of an old legend, which ends sadly, very sadly. In it a golden necklace played a strange part, and the last word of the song rang out — "curses!"

FINN. (*Steps up to* GRAINNE, *who is sitting lost in thought, with bent head.*) My daughter, child with bright eyes full of dreams, you have heard what Daire sang of my hand, of the miraculous power that springs from it?

GRAINNE. (*Dreamily.*) My heart still trembles from the druid's song. He sang of a bird as white as a cloud, of a being that pines in loneliness, singing with a voice more than magic.

FINN. He sang of that bird, indeed, but do you not remember the second part of his song, in which he sang of the beneficent power of my hand? Look, sweet child, it is that same hand which I am now raising toward you, and which in proof of my love adorns you with this precious necklace. (*He places the necklace around her neck.*) A splendid jewel I place on your neck, child, a jewel full of secrets — blissfully magical.

GRAINNE. Why that, my sire? Such a gift you should present to some one — to some one who would be especially dear to your heart. —

FINN. But that is yourself, Grainne, yourself.

GRAINNE. (*Surprised.*) I? But you scarcely know me.

FINN. (*To* CORMAC.) Oh, the charm of childlike innocence! (*To* GRAINNE.) Come, white apparition of more than human beauty!

GRAINNE. Whither? No, leave me here; I wish to speak with Daire.

CORMAC. (*To* FINN.) Grant it, my friend. Her soul is still full of musings. That strange illness, which was half like death, has not passed away without leaving its trace.

DAIRE. With gentle words I will awaken her slumbering thoughts. Go you in to the feast; I will bring her in after you.

FINN. So be it, then!

(*They all move to the rear, into the other section of the hall, and take their seats at the table. The bards play their harps, which sound with muffled tones. At a sign from* DAIRE, GRAINNE'S *maidens also depart, so that she remains alone with the druid.*)

SCENE II

DAIRE *and* GRAINNE.

DAIRE. Grainne, of what are you dreaming? Speak, what is happening in your soul?

GRAINNE. I am recalling the white bird of your song. You sang that sad old story; you told us how ages ago the daughter of an unfortunate king was driven into the sea by

her cruel step-mother; how, by the wave of a druid's wand and by a terrible spell she was changed into a bird. As a consolation she retains human speech and sings songs more beautiful than all others in the world; so charmingly does she sing that even those who are dying of grief or who groan with pain forget their afflictions when they hear her, and doze off into a sweet dream . . . so sweet . . . so sweet! . . . Daire, just as that white bird dwells on that desolate cliff, so there dwells in the depths of sorrow an inexplicable charm that makes our sorrow precious to us. . . . I am intoxicated with that charm.

DAIRE. You are raving, child; recollect yourself. Come out from the dusk into the clear day! Life and love call you.

GRAINNE. Life! Love! Those are stars vibrating between two twilights — between anticipation and recollection. You come out of the twilight — you go into the twilight. You have told me this yourself more than once, Daire.

DAIRE. You came out of the twilight when you ceased to be a child; now you are blooming in the sunshine. True life is just beginning for you. Spring is here for you.

GRAINNE. Oh, Daire, I have languished so long, so long, as if through a long winter!

DAIRE. But now winter is over. Your life will be full of the intoxication of spring and the fame of your husband will be your sun. And you will intoxicate him by your beauty and your youth. The life of a man is often bitter, but a wife is given him by the gods, that she may frighten away pain by sweet illusion. Look, this simple flower in your nosegay is like yourself. That herb also dreamed in the forest. It dreamed of the sun, of the music of the wind, of the blue sky. My knowledge has taught me how to capture those dreams. (*He shows her his bracelet, which he takes off.*) This hollow metal serpent conceals within it the juice of the root of that same plant. A few drops in the mead of that horn would suffice to plunge the whole of your father's court into a short but, nevertheless, a very sweet sleep. Holy nature is full of mighty secrets. Then, be like that herb, child. With your smile, with your sweet dream of youth, evoke visions of bliss before the eyes of your husband when darkness or misfortune comes near to him.

GRAINNE. (*She takes the bracelet from his hand.*) Have you told me the truth? Is that herb really so powerful? Fain would I try it.

DAIRE. You have no need to put pain to sleep. You are a happy bride! Go to your bridegroom; he is awaiting you with eagerness, glorious Finn.

GRAINNE. Why do you constantly speak of Finn? And what bridegroom?

DAIRE. Why, have you not yet awakened? Is he not your bridegroom?

GRAINNE. Who? I fail to comprehend you. . . . Daire, why do you look at me with astonishment? What is happening in Tara, Daire? (*Looks around.*) What does all this mean? And this golden necklace about my neck?

DAIRE. A little while ago Finn, King Finn, your bridegroom, fastened it on you.

GRAINNE. My bridegroom! Daire, I awaken with horror.

DAIRE. What are you saying?

GRAINNE. Oh, nothing, nothing. Is King Finn my bridegroom?

DAIRE. But you received his messengers, you heard his message, and you agreed! Or was it all in a dream that this happened?

GRAINNE. His messengers I clearly saw. . . . O gods, my salvation . . .

DAIRE. What a sigh! Grainne, you conceal your face in your robe? How pale you are, and whom do you now seek in the hall, at the table, with so wild a glance?

GRAINNE. Ah, now indeed I am awake. Look, I am calm. But, friend, speak quickly . . . quickly . . . quickly! . . . Answer! . . .

DAIRE. But you have asked me nothing.

GRAINNE. Finn! Finn! Me for his wife! If it were Ossian his son, or Oscar the son of his son, that would not be strange.— But he! He is older than my father. . . . But I wished to ask you something, Daire. . . .

DAIRE. How your eyes shine in your pale face! . . . You are surely ill. Go to your bed —

GRAINNE. Ah, answer me! . . . That man over there is Ossian. Tell me, who is he on his left?

DAIRE. That youth with eyes like the sky? You know him: it is Oscar, Ossian's son!

GRAINNE. True. And then the man opposite Oscar?

DAIRE. That is Midac, son of King Colga.

GRAINNE. And the man at the other end of the table?

DAIRE. Mac Ronain, a great hero, who a year ago —

GRAINNE. (*Quickly.*) But the warrior who is sitting next to him, whose black hair above his white forehead flutters like the wings of a raven; the hero whose voice is as sweet as the singing of the magic bird in your song —

DAIRE. That is Diarmuid O'Duibhne, the dearest friend of Ossian. He was one of King Finn's messengers; do you not remember him?

GRAINNE. Tell me more of him. I think that I remember!

DAIRE. Diarmuid, whom everybody loves; no one is equal to him, believe me. Even Midac, who avoids all men, would shed his blood for Diarmuid.

GRAINNE. My dear Daire, listen. Go into the hall, where joy circles around the table, and in a low voice invite Ossian and Oscar hither, and Midac, and also — Diarmuid. I wish to talk with them. I desire serious counsel — go.

DAIRE. I go. But where have you put the metal serpent with the magic juice of the herb?

GRAINNE. Here it is in my hand. . . . Go, go and return without delay. (DAIRE *goes out.*) Now quickly act, or die! (*She pours juice from the bracelet into the mead.*) Will you prove your power, mighty herb? Protecting gods, have mercy!

SCENE III

GRAINNE. DAIRE *returns with* OSSIAN, OSCAR, MIDAC *and* DIARMUID.

DAIRE. Here are Ossian and his friends.

GRAINNE. My heart is heavy, ah, so heavy; it asks counsel of you. First, however, Daire, still one more service. Take your horn, glittering with precious stones, the gift of

King Finn. Go to the table and ask the king and my father to drink to my honor. Let that horn go around the whole table, and finally offer it to the bards. Then return hither. My greetings to all!

DAIRE. I gladly obey. (*He departs with the horn.*)

OSSIAN. And now speak, what do you ask of us?

OSCAR. Gladly will I serve you!

MIDAC. I await your beckoning.

GRAINNE. Diarmuid, you alone remain silent.

DIARMUID. Yet I yearn with all my heart to serve you.

GRAINNE. Give proof of that. Go secretly and close the great doors of the hall, and return here.

DIARMUID. Your request is mysterious, but I will obey. (*He goes.*)

DAIRE. (*Returning.*) I have done what you desired of me. All drank, full of joy, and are waiting for you and me to join them. Look, the horn is empty.

GRAINNE. Oscar, stand there by the pillar and watch what is happening in the hall.

DIARMUID. (*Returning.*) The great doors are firmly closed, as you bade.

GRAINNE. Now gods, give me strength, strength, and give weight to my words, that they may penetrate deeply into their souls!

OSCAR. Am I awake or is it an illusion? Finn is sitting motionless. Cormac also; and, as in sleep, their eyelids close heavily, and all those around the table seem benumbed! And the harps fall from the hands of the bards! Treachery in Tara! Are they all dead, or are they turned into stone? Father, look!

GRAINNE. (*Goes quickly and pulls the curtain so that the other room cannot be seen.*) Do not speak of treachery—and fear naught. It was done by me. For a short time only have I put them to sleep. Daire, your herb has proved its power.

DAIRE. What are you undertaking?

GRAINNE. You shall all be my witnesses that there was no other way to act. (*She goes with bowed head to* DIARMUID.) Diarmuid, my life, nay more, my hope, my happiness, my salvation are in your hands. Listen, if I wished

to give you a gift, you would not scorn it; you would accept it even if it had no great value?

DIARMUID. Every gift from you would be great, being your gift. From your hand death itself would be sweet.

GRAINNE. And if that gift were — my love? Would you give me yours in return?

DIARMUID. (*Cries out.*) Grainne, you know of my love? You have guessed it! . . . (*Suddenly, coldly.*) Pardon! You see that I am mad. I know that this cannot be. How could I love the bride of King Finn!

GRAINNE. That first outcry of your heart suffices me; it betrayed what you hide deep within you. Oh, Diarmuid, I know that now mere duty prompts you. Ossian, Daire, I could weep for shame. I know that I am talking as a young girl should not talk.

DAIRE. Poor child, resign yourself to your fate! We will forget what we have heard.

GRAINNE. No, Daire. Listen, Diarmuid; do not think that a sudden burst of passion impels me. I love you, Diarmuid. On the great meadow on the sunny side of the house I saw you when you were contending; I saw you when as a victor you stood calm as a young oak and with an eye as kind as the clear sky! You turned your eyes to me and from them your soul shone on me; you cannot say that you did not guess my love for you. You see that I guessed yours — although you were silent, and are still silent. Diarmuid, I cried out in my heart, "Let it be he or let it be the grave! . . ." And such a cry, strong as death, has power over the soul like a solemn oath. I knew not your name, I did not ask it; I remained silent just as you did. You departed; and my heart went with you, after you it flew like a bird. And it was dark and empty in my bosom, dark under my forehead; for all my thoughts pursued you, and my poor heart! I have finished. . . . Ah, do not stand before me speechless and motionless as a rock. Diarmuid, why do you hide your silent face in your hands?

DIARMUID. I am stifling a sob; it is unworthy of a man! What have you done to me? No, look, I am again strong. You are the bride of King Finn. Finn is old, but he is

immortal through his fame. He is almost a god! Why could you not love him? And if I were drunk with your words, if I were so mad as to seize you and flee with you from Tara, where in all Erin is there a forest, where a cave, where a castle that would guard us against the revenge of King Finn?

GRAINNE. You do not know fear, you cannot deceive me. You wish to be true to your duty. Listen to one word more. By your heroism, by your honor I implore you, and by all that is holy to you in life, oh, free me from the hands of King Finn! As a man, as a hero, you should protect the unfortunate and the weak. Help me! You still hesitate? Then swear that you do not love me, and if you can do that, then I will release you. Then I will vanish from Tara, alone; alone I will escape and will find a road leading to the darkness of the grave. Then seek further friendship with King Finn! Diarmuid, look into my eyes, and swear that you know no love for me! Swear!

DIARMUID. Grainne, you know the truth, you know it!... Ossian, Daire, you have heard? How is it possible to endure this?

OSSIAN. Act as your heart bids you! My poor father!

OSCAR. Hearken to her entreaty! Be happy, Diarmuid.

DAIRE. Grainne is yours, for she has given you her love, and hideous would be this marriage with Finn. Yet alas, and woe, black is the day which has brought you that rare gift of love! The future bears evil in its bosom, I feel this with certainty. But I can say nothing except, "Go!"

MIDAC. I speak last, yet my words will not be without weight. You have asked, Diarmuid, where is there a castle, where a cave, where you could find concealment. You know well the way to my house in Kerry. Hasten thither, my Diarmuid, I will follow you and I long to guard you, and I will so conceal you that Finn will not find you! But, tell me, how shall we detain the king so that he shall not soon overtake you?

GRAINNE. On the meadow where I first saw Diarmuid horses are grazing. They know me; we will mount the swiftest, then I will sing a certain song and the whole herd

will run after us. There will not be a horse in all Tara that can serve the king.

Ossian. Come. I will close the stronghold after you. Hasten!

Oscar. I will try to weary my grandfather with entreaties, and so hold him back.

Grainne. It is time that we were on our way, Diarmuid.

Diarmuid. Oh, Grainne, you are still mistress of your fate! — Remember, remember that perchance we shall wander without a roof and without a hearth. In the forest they will chase us like wild beasts! My heart bleeds at the thought of your sufferings.

Grainne. I have only one word: I love you.

Diarmuid. (*Presses her to his heart.*) Within me the sun shines. Oh, Grainne, how dearly I love you! Come then! Fate has joined us, and with you I will remain until death parts us! (*They go out by a small side door, the bolt of which* Daire *pulls aside.* Ossian *follows them.*)

Daire. May we meet again in sweet peace!

Midac. (*At the window.*) They have already reached the meadow. How white her garments shine against the night! They have mounted their horses. Look, their mettled steeds rush like fire to the river. Perchance Grainne is now singing, for the whole restless herd are raising their heads. They are following her. Their manes fly in the wind and the silver ornaments braided into their manes sparkle and gleam. What a wild sight! As swiftly flies the spring wind from the mountains. . . . They are at the ford. On the other side they flash over the meadow. The foremost are at the very border of the forest. . . . Now, Finn, bid good night to your love!

Ossian. (*Returns.*) I have closed the gate after them and I have wedged the bolts so firmly that without axes no one can open it. That will hold back Finn — but it will not save them.

Oscar. How my heart beats! Will their sleep last long?

Daire. (*Draws aside the curtain.*) Ah, misfortune! Finn is already raising his head; he is looking around.

Midac. Let him now learn that he has only dreamed a sweet dream! (*He takes the horn and blows.*)

Scene IV

The same, Finn, Cormac, *and the bodyguards of both kings.*

Finn. (*At the table.*) Who frightens away sweet music from our ears by that harsh sound?

Cormac. What has happened to us? You all, like myself, are shaking sleep from your eyelids. In my soul reality still struggles with the dim visions of slumber. (*All rise from the table.*)

Finn. Who has dared play so bold a trick?

Cormac. Speak, Daire, what has happened to us?

Daire. O king, O king, a bitter trial awaits you — and Finn. (*They all pass quickly into the front part of the hall.*)

Finn. Grainne!— Where is she?

Cormac. What has happened to my child?

Finn. Speak, Ossian! You are silent! Oscar!

Cormac. Daire, Daire, is she dead?

Midac. For Finn she is dead. Grainne is no longer in Tara. She has fled. But she is not alone. Diarmuid has fled with her.

Finn. (*Snatches his weapons from the post.*) Dishonorable liar —

Ossian. (*Holds him back.*) Father, he has spoken the truth. Yet Diarmuid is guiltless.

Finn. Then guilt has completely vanished from the earth and shame is honor. Are you laughing at me? My own son!

Ossian. Grainne loves him and by earnest entreaties she has forced him to save her from — forgive me — a hated marriage.

Finn. A curse on this house, where shame has awaited me! Ah, long will the bards sing of this; and at the firesides people will laugh at this old man.— I shall be a proverb to all Erin. Woe! Woe! In my declining years shame steals on me and grins insolently at me with its accursed face.— When an old man falls, then the lips of the young men curl in scorn. You hypocrites, why do you not laugh

aloud? Why do you hide your laughter behind a serious mask? Laugh just as I do, just as I laugh! . . .

OSSIAN. Bitter, frightful as the sea, is your laughter. My father, take courage.

FINN. New youth was coming to me; and Grainne, my sun, was warming my soul. She has vanished! Now I am doubly old, and my honor and my fame have grown old with me. Just as a spring storm plucks off the dry leaves from a tree, so his boldness has bereaved me of them! Luxuriously, in careless gaiety, he can now make sport of them! The old, ludicrous king! They point at me with their fingers! Oh, oh! — I lament, and in the meantime he who has betrayed me hides himself in the deep forest with her whom I chose for myself; and his lips — — Oh, Cormac! Oh, horror! Help! The hall is falling about me! . . . Woe! . . . (*He faints.*)

OSSIAN. My poor father!

OSCAR. Grandfather! Grandfather!

CORMAC. Why have I lived to see this day? Finn, my friend!

FINN. (*Rises.*) I am again a man. I am Finn, King Finn. Tremble, all of you. Who will still dare laugh when I call for revenge, revenge! Oh, Diarmuid, be assured that they will long sing how the old king repaid you for your black treachery!

CORMAC. Have compassion upon Grainne!

FINN. To horse. All of you who feel with me, seize your arms! Quickly to horse, and unfasten the hounds; the hunt is on! My weapons! (*He hurries away.*)

(*The bodyguards of both kings go out.*)

CORMAC. Woe, woe is me! Oh, my child!

OSSIAN. Cormac, I wish to stand between my father and his fury.

OSCAR. I wish to embrace his knees.

CORMAC. My strength fails me; there is a mist before my sight.

DAIRE. Come to bed, poor old man!

(DAIRE *and* OSSIAN *lead him out,* OSCAR *follows.*)

Scene V

Midac, *later* Finn.

Midac. How the old man reeled under this blow of fate! And I was calm. At last I feel strong and determined. Oh, King Finn, you generous giver of the golden necklace from Hisberna, do not succumb to your grief! We will first settle our accounts together. He is coming. Quiet, heart, do not betray thyself too soon!

Finn. (*Comes in, armed.*) Is my horse saddled? Who is here?

Midac. A man who pities you.

Finn. I am not begging for sympathy.

Midac. You have no need of it. You will sate your vengeance. But not soon — if I do not help you.

Finn. What do you mean?

Midac. That your people will soon return hither, when they have succeeded in cutting down the gates — for they are firmly closed; Diarmuid took care of that.

Finn. Curses!

Midac. Then they will tell you that all the horses have run away after Grainne. Be calm, do not tear your beard; you will find the fugitives — if I help you.

Finn. I can even be calm, if it is a question of revenge. Are you willing to help me? Ask any price.—

Midac. I am not a traitor, nor am I for sale. Neither from love for you, nor from hatred of Diarmuid do I act as I am acting. When the time arrives I will explain all to you; that I promise you.

Finn. If you are not acting to the detriment of your honor, so much the better for you; it is indifferent to me — I want naught but revenge.

Midac. King, you gave me a house at the foot of Knockfierna Mountain; you gave me riches, for on my pastures feed great herds of horses and flocks of sheep.— Yet never have you come to my house, and never have you been my guest. So your gift lacks consecration, a proof of confidence and love.

Finn. Verily, now is not the time to invite me to a feast.

MIDAC. I am not doing so; I do not regard that house as mine. You know, although the reason is unknown to you, that, leaving your house in Kerry, I have long lived among the cliffs at the seashore. The house is still yours. I say simply: O King, hurry to Kerry, to your house at the foot of Knockfierna.

FINN. What shall I find there?

MIDAC. There you will find Diarmuid and Grainne! There revenge awaits you.

FINN. Do you speak truth?

MIDAC. I swear it. But one word more. Do you wish to publish abroad my dishonorable speech? Do you wish my name to pass as the name of a traitor? I desire a reward for my service. It is this! Do not mention even to your son a word of what I have told you. As if by chance, direct your steps to that region, and enter the house as if driven by mere curiosity. Hide your intentions — and revenge will celebrate a glorious holiday in the shadow of Knockfierna Mountain. Do you promise? Surely I may ask this much.

FINN. It shall be according to your will. I am grateful to you, whatever may be the reason for your action. I promise silence; the secret shall remain between me and you. (*He extends his hand.*)

MIDAC. Quiet, I hear an uproar. Your people are returning from the meadow. Your son must not find us conversing. Farewell! We shall meet in Kerry. (*He hurries away.*)

(*While the bodyguard of the king is returning the curtain falls.*)

ACT III

The house of MIDAC *in Kerry. A great circular hall of polished wood, painted richly, and of many colors. At the rear is a large door, wide open, through which there is an outlook on the meadow, which is bordered with mighty service trees, full of red berries. Behind the trees is a river. There is bright sunlight on the trees and on the grass. In the room are crude wooden benches covered with bear skins.*

Scene I

Grainne *and* Diarmuid *are sitting together on a large chair.*

Diarmuid. Your dreamy gaze wanders into the distance, Grainne. I know where your thoughts have flown. Longing stirs within you. You recall Tara, emerging from the grove of venerable oak trees; you recall the old man sitting there on his throne. He is forsaken and alone.

Grainne. You have guessed it, I am thinking of my father's ancient castle. In my thoughts I saw just now that great hall lighted up by fire, where you feasted so noisily at the festival in Tara. It was the evening of that day when I saw you contend on the meadow. I came in quietly. Unnoticed I stood hidden behind a column in the shadow, and my eyes searched for you and found you. Ossian was singing; he sang of youth, how quickly it fades. "It is like the dream of the hunter slumbering in the forest. He falls asleep on the hillside in the sweet light of the sun, and he awakens at twilight amid blasts of stormy winds." Such were his words, And I wept, for I remembered how that same day, when the sun was rising, a deep peace still dwelt in my soul — when it was setting, peace had been driven from it! It seemed to me that my youth would pass in sorrow, without the sunny dream of happy love!

Diarmuid. Not long before the festival in Tara, I met with a great misfortune of which no one yet knows. I suffered in silence. With my heart full of grief I left Allen with King Finn. What happened to me when I beheld you is hard to explain. It was not a thunderbolt that shook me. No, it seemed to me that your being entered softly into mine, as softly as a flickering sunbeam. In my heart was holiness, such holiness! Before I saw you, divined you, loved you, my heart was like a forest, which, dark and shaken by the wind, laments all night long. Then, high above the forest sails a cloud and takes compassion upon it. And the cloud is filled with tenderness, until it melts away languorously in a storm of starry tears. Flake by flake it falls softly, softly, through the night, until forest and cloud are one. And the sun comes out, and the forest, dark before, now

from moment to moment, there came to Francis Jammes a sensation approaching the physical in its poignancy, of having been forgotten, overlooked, unrecognized. Is not this, perhaps, the explanation of those outbursts of irritation; of those stinging words; of those moments of unwarranted pride?

And yet, as each next morning broke, he was to be found kneeling with bowed head among the crowd of devout peasants women, before the altar; and, humbly, on bent shoulders, he accepted the yoke which the Almighty decreed was his to bear.

So now, to-day, when there actually appears before his eyes what he had so steadfastly believed; when at last to his poetry has been awarded the crown of enduring fame, it can matter but little to him that he is about to take his proper place in the front rank of contemporaneous French poets. And that pre-eminence he shares with none; unless it be that he stands chosen from among the many with Claudel and with Valéry. Even so, his niche is somewhat removed, since that niche is consecrated to men who have kept themselves from the world apart; who have eschewed all worldly power, all social honors, all secular distinctions. Except for the Cross of the Legion d'Honneur, none has he accepted save only that Cross which he loved and to which he clung when his Last Hour came upon him.

For many years I believed that he had reached the peak of his glory in those earlier anthologies: "De l'Angélus de l'Aube à l'Angélus du Soir"; "Le Deuil des Primevères"; "Clairières dans le Ciel". I now bow to the judgment of his young disciple, Jean Labbé, who maintains that of all his poems, the recently published collections, "Les Poèmes Mesurés" and "Sources" are his finest work.

Francis Jammes, my beloved, of all my masters, you are the one for whom I have felt the greatest admiration and the deepest love. I am proud to belong to a generation which has never given aught but respect to its elders; of whom we, its members, are but the humble successors. And yet it was you who opened my eyes that they might see the beauties of this world. It was you who achieved in a manner utterly beyond my unworthy comprehension, the transmutation of Satyrs into Angels, and of the Great God Pan into the living Christ. You, in your work, established the bond between Nature and the Grave Divine. And in those Heavenly Regions where to-night you are, near unto Maurice and Eugénie de Guêrin and to André Lafon, pray, I beseech you, unceasingly for those of us who in this world have loved you and who, until they die, in hushed tones and solely for their own pleasure, will re-tell your poems into their listening ears.

(*Translated from the French by* John Heard)

Francis Jammes, several of whose poems in translation appear in this number, died early in November. The current issue of POET LORE had already gone to press before the obituary by François Mauriac (of the Académie Française) reached the Editor's desk. Feeling that the outstanding positions in French Letters occupied by Jammes and by Mauriac would make the Obituary of real interest to our readers, the Editors of POET LORE have here printed this fly-leaf which is enclosed with the Autumn Number of the Magazine.

TO FRANCIS JAMMES — AN OBITUARY TRIBUTE

by

François Mauriac

(*Member of the Académie Française*)

Those of us who do not believe that the affairs of men are governed by pure chance, rejoice at the honor which Our Almighty Father has bestowed upon his faithful poet in welcoming him with solemn acclaim into the glorious and eternal Company of His Saints.

The end came while Jammes was listening to the Services appropriate to that day, namely, to that part of the Gospel which we term the "Beatitudes," of which all are intrinsically applicable to him, but especially that one which promises that the meek shall inherit the earth. For, apart from occasional and purely superficial outbursts of violence, Jammes was meek; his was that inner meekness given only to those who truly love the poor, and to whom Poverty is the Godhead incarnate. As his reward, it was vouchsafed him to pass on to others in his poems the spirit of all the breezes and of all the floating clouds of the provinces of Béarn and of Biscaye; and his verses are redolent of the sweet fragrance of peasant gardens when the sun shines through the last drops of a passing shower.

There are those — happily only a few — who feel that he overestimated himself. After all, is not the reason easily defined? All great poets fail of recognition during their lives: even the greatest, Hugo, was as little recognized as was Jammes; and in his case it was not his poetry to which, in general, he owes his outstanding position. Fortunately, in Paris, some devices still exist, which allow a poet to forget that others, besides himself, evaluate his book. At Orthez and at Hasparen, daily, almost

shines with a magic light, and the winds are silent, seeing the beautiful poetry of that white embrace. . . . There is an old proverb which says: "Woman puts suffering to sleep." Oh, Grainne, you have soothed my suffering . . .

GRAINNE. And what sort of suffering could weigh on your bright soul, my glorious hero?

DIARMUID. Seek not even in thought to discover that! . . .

GRAINNE. Are you hiding something from me? I do not wish to bring only sleep to your suffering; no, I wish to drive it entirely away.

DIARMUID. That is not possible! I am happy, Grainne, but a secret dart is pricking me. How can I speak of it? To do so would harm the memory of one dear to me. Some day I will tell you my grievous secret.

GRAINNE. (*Rising.*) Ha, what was that? Woe!

DIARMUID. What is the matter, Grainne?

GRAINNE. Did you not hear it?

DIARMUID. I heard nothing. Did you?

GRAINNE. I heard a deep, sad sound. First on the meadow it resounded quietly, then through the golden air it came closer, until it died away on the threshold as a sigh. Ah, Diarmuid, I know that sad sound.

DIARMUID. You were mistaken; I heard nothing.

GRAINNE. I know that sad sound! There in Tara, far beyond the river, behind the hills, in that ancient, solitary room in the tower hangs a harp. It was that harp sounding.

DIARMUID. You are dreaming, Grainne. How could you have heard the vibrating of strings far off in Tara!

GRAINNE. In Tara, in that room in the tower, lived a prophetess. She was of my father's line. For long, long ages she lived there, and a grievous, unending sorrow held her lips closed. She was as if dumb. I see her yet, her white hair fluttering in the breeze, and the pupils of her deep-set eyes burning like live coals. Through the whole day she sat in that ancient tower, around which the wind eternally howls, and stared into empty space; and in her sleepless nights she used to see, they say, the shades of the dead, as they came out from the forests by the light of the moon, like blue smoke. . . . Whenever she saw in the bosom of the future a misfortune threatening Tara, or someone of the line

of King Cormac — she passed her crooked finger over the strings of her harp. Then it rang out as a long, sad cry. That sound I heard just now.

DIARMUID. But the prophetess has died and her harp has become silent.

GRAINNE. A hundred songs from the grey ages make known to us that harps have sometimes spoken of themselves with mysterious cries when treachery has threatened a great hero. . . . Diarmuid, let us leave this house.

DIARMUID. What, you wish to flee from certain shelter — and whither?

GRAINNE. Erin is full of musing solitudes and deep forests, where trees sing in the wind like druids.

DIARMUID. No, Grainne. Danger lurks beyond this threshold. King Finn —

GRAINNE. Do you know anything of him? You are concealing something from me, Diarmuid.

DIARMUID. Since you are strong, Grainne, perhaps I may speak. You will readily guess that Finn will not give up his revenge; you knew this, indeed, before we fled from Tara. Be prepared.

GRAINNE. Has King Finn found our tracks? Does he know where we are?

DIARMUID. I cannot doubt it. King Finn has a dog; they call him Bran. His eyes shine like a summer's day, and in their depths dwells a soul. That dog loves me devotedly, with a touching love. This morning at sunrise when you were asleep, and my thoughts, still uncertain, were wrestling with wakefulness, all at once I felt on my face a warm breath, and, suddenly wide awake, I saw Bran. His eyes were sad, and in place of the words that fate forbade him to speak he uttered only a sigh. I kissed him and he nestled close to me, then he whined softly, as if he wished to weep — and disappeared.

GRAINNE. King Finn's dog in the house!

DIARMUID. Ah, surely either Oscar or Ossian sent the dog to warn me.

GRAINNE. How did King Finn guess that we were hiding here? We let the horses loose on all sides in the forest and came here on foot. There were no traces left behind us!

However it may be, where are your weapons? I hear steps! It is King Finn! Ah yes, again I hear the sad sound of the harp!

DIARMUID. Not Finn, it is a friend who comes, Midac himself.

SCENE II

The same and MIDAC.

MIDAC. Good fortune to you beneath my roof, friends!

DIARMUID. How magnificent your armor is! How your shield glistens! Your helmet glows like the sun, and the sheath of your sword is set thick with jewels.

MIDAC. I have come thus arrayed in order to welcome King Finn on my own ground.

GRAINNE. Did you hear, Diarmuid? He welcomes Finn, who thirsts for your blood.

DIARMUID. Be not alarmed. So King Finn is near at hand?

MIDAC. He is, but he cannot suspect that you are here. Pure chance brought him hither. As soon as I heard that he, with his bodyguard, was nearing my house, I went out to welcome them.

GRAINNE. What does he seek here, if he does not suspect that you are hiding us?

MIDAC. He and his men are hunting. Beyond the river, on Knockfierna Mountain, they have pitched camp. There they have prepared beds of heather and have made a fire. The king's people are frightening the wild animals out of their lairs. The forest resounds with the whistling of the hunters and the baying of the hounds; meadow and plain are full of life. I have ordered the gates of my house to be opened and I have invited the king to rest under my roof. I think that I have acted wisely. If he had any suspicion —

GRAINNE. Ah, do not doubt it!

DIARMUID. You have seen him. Is his face sad?

MIDAC. No, he was peaceful and his appearance was majestic. When, on the hillside, at dawn, he stood upright against the gray sky, he seemed gigantic. The first rays of the rising sun changed the metal of his helmet to silver. In each hand he held a death-dealing hunter's spear. When I

invited him to my house, he silently nodded his head in consent.

GRAINNE. He will come here; he will find us!

MIDAC. No, he will not find you. Go, Diarmuid, and hide with your wife in that hollow service tree which I showed you, not far from the gate. I alone know the secret of the tree. You are as safe there as in the bosom of the earth itself. I have already taken your weapons there. Go. Be calm, Grainne, and fear not.

GRAINNE. I am calm. Who dares speak of fear when Diarmuid is present?

DIARMUID. Oh, if I could but go out on the meadow and strike with my good sword on a shield until it should ring out like the crashing of thunder; if I could but challenge my enemy to battle. If only that enemy were not Finn! How dear he is to me!

(*A horn is heard off stage.*)

MIDAC. Listen! His horn! He has reached the river already. Go, Diarmuid . . . (DIARMUID *and* GRAINNE *go out; he accompanies them to the threshold and gazes after them.*) They are concealed and safe. In a moment he will be here. Thou soul of my father, art thou gazing down from the clouds? Is it thy voice which cries in the trees like the wind? (*The horn sounds nearer.*) King Finn! King Finn! Now he strides across the meadow. How majestic and great! Yet how base! Great? Ah, tomorrow he will be no better than the worm that perchance even now he is crushing unconsciously beneath his foot. Thou proud, blood-stained king, is there not one voice that might call out to thee in warning, "Stand"? — Here he is. Be quiet, heart; hand, do not tremble; and face, show him a lying smile!

SCENE III

MIDAC *and* FINN.

FINN. Where are they? Where is . . . ? I tremble with anger. . . . Quickly, lead me to them!

MIDAC. Have you come alone? Have you kept your promise?

FINN. No one suspects that you have betrayed Diarmuid. I concealed my plans; I pretended to forget my vengeance and to seek consolation in the hunt and in my wanderings over Erin. Even my son thinks I am visiting Knockfierna by mere chance. How anxiously they watched my every step knowing that their friend was here. Now speak, where is he?

MIDAC. Are you well armed? You know his prowess in combat, and you will contend with him alone, for you cannot desire that I should help you against my own guest.

FINN. You forget that I am Finn.

MIDAC. You are a hero, and your eyes inspire such terror as overthrows your enemy even before your weapon reaches him: that I know, O king — but hate blinds a man; this combat will be different from those to which you are wonted! You yourself have said that you tremble with anger. I fear your eagerness.

FINN. I have my horn with me; and if the impossible should happen, if he should — the sound of my horn will summon help.

MIDAC. Give me the horn; I myself will summon help if I see that you are weakening.

FINN. (*Gives him the horn.*) Take it! But let us delay no longer. Where are — ?

MIDAC. Will you not take my sword? It is longer than yours; remember that Diarmuid has at his side his famous blade, the Moralltach.

FINN. My own sword is good; it has won fame. Look, how it gleams with eagerness for battle!

MIDAC. But measure first. . . . (*He takes the sword from* FINN'S *hand and measures it with his own.*) Do you know, O king, that for the first time I hold your sword in my hands? With what strange feelings do I grasp this famous blade! Did it fight against the Lochlannachs* and King Colga?

FINN. Yes. But — give it to me! We must go.

MIDAC. Do but allow me to look at the gleam of that metal. . . . King Colga! My father —

FINN. Was a great hero. But do not delay! Let us go.

MIDAC. O king, one word more. You regard me as a

*Norsemen.

betrayer, but at Tara I told you that neither from hatred of Diarmuid nor from love for you did I act thus; and now the time has come for me to explain to you.

FINN. That you can do later — now give me my sword and lead me to him.

MIDAC. No, hear me first! (*He laughs.*) I will not give you the sword, nor will I lead you to him until you have heard me.

FINN. (*Impatiently.*) You are torturing me. Yet, be it so, but speak briefly.

MIDAC. Listen. I was naught but a child when King Colga, my father, called his heroes together on a meadow full of flowers, before the palace in Berva, and said with a clear voice: "Is there one among you who can reproach me for any serious wrong? If so, let him speak." In one voice they called out, "Nay, nay!"

FINN. Colga was a great king.

MIDAC. When all had become silent the king spoke again: "Are you blind," he asked, "that you do not see my great fault? Hitherto I have neglected one sacred obligation. I say of myself that I am Lord of the Isles and of the Sea — and yet everyone knows that I do not speak the truth. There is one island, large and beautiful, an island of green hills and deep forests, of rich pastures, of strong men and beautiful women, an island over which my forefathers once ruled and which now does not acknowledge me as master. That island is Erin. Let us rise and attack Erin!"

FINN. Why do you speak of that ancient wrong? Your father hurled himself upon us and we defended ourselves. He fell — we conquered. Fate decreed it thus. But you have found a new home among us.

MIDAC. Yet have I always felt myself a stranger among you. There is only one man whom I have loved, and whom I still love — Diarmuid O'Duibhne.

FINN. My enemy! Ah, he has won the hearts of all men! You love him, you will not betray him! You lied to me —

MIDAC. He is hidden in the house, I did not lie. I tell you that I love him; yet I would kill him if the blood of my father clove to him. By this I mean that not even love will save a man from my vengeance. And now I wish to hear one word

from your lips — tell me who struck my father down.

FINN. That secret none shall ever know. He fell in honorable battle by an unknown hand.

MIDAC. That is what you all answer — and you all lie.

FINN. Are you mad? Do you speak thus to me?

MIDAC. I know that King Colga did not fall in battle. He was basely murdered.

FINN. You are mistaken.

MIDAC. I saw him fall. Now you tremble! And indeed you have good reason to do so. A deep cavern hid me, a child shaking with fear. I was there alone with an old bard, a friend of our line. He was wounded and dying. It was already evening and the din of distant battle came to us. I wept in my distress and poured water from a helmet on the gaping wounds of my old friend. Suddenly my father appeared. "Victory favors us," he called out so that the dying man might hear. And the bard smiled. My father turned to me and said: "Dry your tears, child. Look, my sword is damaged; quick, find me another!" In the cavern were many weapons, and while I, with my weak childish hand was drawing out a sword from the pile of war gear, my father hastened to the spring near by and bent over to drink . . . Then the bushes rustled. In full armor, enraged, his eyes flaming like fire, dark, large, and terrible, a stranger appeared. He saw my father, who did not see him, and fright made me speechless. O king, that man, that murderer, threw himself on Colga and with a blow killed him; and he severed his head with one stroke and hurried away with it, leaving the corpse for me to weep over. You know that the bloody head of King Colga, hurled into the ranks of the warring Lochlannachs smote them with terror and helped you to victory.

FINN. Ah, that was indeed an unheard-of horror — were you a witness of it? And who was that man?

MIDAC. You ask? You know that better than I could know it. I was only a child and it was already twilight; I was overcome with terror and I was blinded by my tears. Near me in the shade of the cavern the old bard was dying, the death rattle was already sounding in his throat as he moaned: "Woe will come to your line, cursed murderer, for Colga will be avenged. May a cloud hang over your life and shame over

your death!" O king, thrice I kissed the corpse of my father and swore vengeance, by the sun, by the moon, and by all the elements. Today I wish to fulfill that oath.

FINN. But you do not know the murderer.

MIDAC. I know him today, even as I know you. Listen, King Finn. On taking leave of my father my mother took off her gold necklace and wound it around King Colga's arm as a bracelet. That necklace came from the Land of Eternal Spring, from the gardens of Hisberna. I knew it well; I know it better than well. That necklace was to protect my father by its magic. It did not fulfill its purpose, but yet it has now betrayed his secret, accursed murderer! During my father's death struggle it slid off his arm and caught on the murderer's garment. He seized it and hid it in his bosom. So it disappeared from my sight, gleaming ruddily — and I saw it no more until I saw it in Tara, whither your messengers had brought it; in Tara where you fastened it upon Grainne. — *You,* then, are my father's murderer!

FINN. No, you are wrong! No! That necklace was given to me —

MIDAC. Who gave it to you?

FINN. That I promised not to reveal. He requested it; for what reasons I knew not.

MIDAC. (*Suddenly furious.*) You white-haired liar! No, you are his murderer; and you shall die by my hand! You came to this house for your own destruction. Just as Colga fell without his sword, not in battle but basely murdered — so shall you perish! I will be as base as you were! (*He quickly closes the door and draws the bolt.*)

FINN. Coward! Oh, treacherous viper! Woe to him who trusts a man from another land!

MIDAC. You are right, I, a Lochlannach, trusted you. (*He laughs.*) Ha, I see anguish in your eyes!

FINN. You see indignation and scorn in them. To fall without battle. Murder! Murder! O Diarmuid, you are my destruction!

MIDAC. When you fall in the dust, then I will call him and Grainne to exult above your death struggle.

FINN. He is not as base as yourself! Would that he knew how you are dealing with me!

MIDAC. What need for long speeches? — Die like a wolf, like a cur! (*He attacks him.*)

FINN. By *your* hand! Snake! — Diarmuid, Diarmuid! Do you hear me? Come! Help me! Or else slay me yourself!

MIDAC. You are calling in vain — die! (*He assails him.*)

FINN. Diarmuid! Diarmuid!

SCENE IV

The same; DIARMUID *and* GRAINNE.

DIARMUID. (*Behind the door.*) Hold, Midac! Stop! Are you attacking the king?

FINN. I have no sword, Diarmuid; it is murder, and you are aiding him!

DIARMUID. Open the door, Midac!

MIDAC. When I have finished my work! (*Assails* FINN.)

FINN. (*Struggles with him.*) Murderer! Murderer! Alas, I cannot defend myself.

DIARMUID. (*Breaks down the door and enters;* GRAINNE *remains silently at the door.*) Stop, Midac! What are you doing? Spare his white hairs!

MIDAC. Let me finish! A wolf, even if he is old, is still but a wolf! (*Assails* FINN.)

DIARMUID. (*Throws himself between them.*) I am here, O king!

MIDAC. Fool, you have saved him to your own destruction! Why did you not remain hidden? Do you thus repay my love? Do you take the part of my enemy and your own?

DIARMUID. I heard him calling in agony. . . . O king . . . how your look cuts me to the heart — the frown on your forehead! — My wrong to you! . . .

MIDAC. Diarmuid, you do not know how you have wounded me; you have prevented me from spilling evil blood and now I shall thirst for it eternally.

DIARMUID. How has the king injured you?

MIDAC. The blood of King Colga clings to his hands; he is his murderer.

DIARMUID. No, Midac — O Gods! — Midac — King Colga —

MIDAC. Fell in war? That is what you believe, but I

know that a miserable, miserable murderer stole his fame and his life.

DIARMUID. No, a hero felled him. —

MIDAC. A hero! A wolf attacked a sleeping lion.

DIARMUID. (*In anguish.*) Silence, Midac! —

MIDAC. A cur bit a proud stag — oh, a murderer more foul than words can tell!

DIARMUID. Silence, I say, you blasphemer! —

MIDAC. Oh, that was a base deed! —

DIARMUID. If your life is dear to you, be silent!

MIDAC. Whom are you defending — that wretched man? Shame be to him all his life; let shame follow him even below the ground; let his ashes be accursed!

DIARMUID. Silence!

MIDAC. Before his barrow let every man of honor spit and cry out, "Coward!"

DIARMUID. (*Knocks him to the ground.*) Be silent! The murderer was my father!

GRAINNE. O immortal gods! That, then, was your grief!

MIDAC. (*Drops his sword.*) Your father! Woe is me!

FINN. What have you said, Diarmuid?

DIARMUID. Midac, you have torn my secret from me by force. I can no longer conceal the truth. Learn all, then. Donn, my father, was half mad from the carnage about him, bewildered by the reek of the spilled blood of the men of Erin. He was no longer master of his senses. It seemed to him that Erin was drowning in blood; it seemed to him that we were lost — and an unconquerable, wild hatred flared up in his heart. He thirsted for the blood of the man who was the author of our misfortune. He vainly sought King Colga in battle; he cut himself a wide path through your army. . . . Suddenly he found your father at the spring. . . . He rushed on, deaf and blind with fury, against the scourge of Erin. He cut him down as he would have slain a wolf. When he had gained victory by that bloody deed his sound mind returned to him. He shuddered at his terrible rage and was ashamed of his deed. He became sullen and unhappy, No one knew what was racking him. . . . He lived in our ancient castle amidst the woods and never again did he unsheathe his sword. When he was dying, he confided his story

to me. Midac, I wept for what he had done—and for you. . . . I wished in time to share with you what was weighing upon me; I wished to appease you . . . but I was afraid to defile his memory. . . . By my love for you I wanted to compensate for what could not be wiped out. — Midac, I have suffered torment.

MIDAC. Oh, sorrow, sorrow! (*He covers his face.*)

DIARMUID. So I stand between you, Midac and King Finn, under the burden of guilt. Your clouded brows cast a shadow upon me, reproaching me for the wrongs I have done you both; you feel nothing save hatred for me. . . . And yet you are both so dear to me. . . . For the wrongs that I have done fate must bear the blame. Ah, I am overwhelmed with sorrow.

GRAINNE. (*Goes up to him and lays her head on his breast.*) My Diarmuid!

DIARMUID. (*Presses her to his heart.*) Sweet consolation!

FINN. (*Starts.*) Ha, Grainne! . . . Why do you cover your face with a veil and why do you turn away?

DIARMUID. Reproach me, not her. Here I stand, Finn, awaiting your vengeance. (*He hands* FINN *the sword that* MIDAC *has dropped.*) Here is your weapon. —

GRAINNE. (*Throws herself on his breast.*) And here, husband, is your shield!

DIARMUID. O king, you look cloudily upon me; you are silent. —

MIDAC. The king knits his brows. . . . That forbodes ill. If only Ossian were here! (*He goes to the threshold and blows the horn.*)

DIARMUID. Midac, sympathy looks out from your eyes. Speak, are you willing to make peace with me? You see that combat between us is now impossible! Nay, do not turn away, but listen. In my house you will find gold, precious stones, and rare weapons; on my pastures great herds wander. — I will pay you splendidly for the king's head. Take all, both my house and my forests. I will go out of my own gate as poor as a beggar, and yet I shall bless you for making peace with me!

MIDAC. (*After a short inner conflict.*) So be it, then! I will come to you; you shall pay for the head, and my father's soul will find peace!

DIARMUID. I thank you. (*He embraces him.*)

SCENE V

The same; OSSIAN, OSCAR, *and several members of their bodyguard.*

OSSIAN. Diarmuid and the king are here. — My father, I have followed close upon you. — I was afraid; I am still trembling. —

FINN. Silence, son! I will forgive him.

DIARMUID. (*Joyously.*) O king —

FINN. Be silent! Well you know that I can do naught else. I do not wish revenge — do not claim love.

DIARMUID. Oh, sad is this reconciliation! Do not frown thus! O king, a single smile! . . . I wait for it, I beg for it! This causes me such grief! How glowing was your smile in bygone days!

FINN. You have driven my smile away, Diarmuid; do not remind me in what way you have done it. Oscar, Ossian, let us depart! We will return to Allen. You, Diarmuid, go in peace to your father's castle. Bury yourself in your ancient forests, just as he did, and never show your face before me again.

DIARMUID. (*Kneels.*) I will go to my father's castle — but I beg you to come there too as my guest! Then I will believe that you have forgiven me, not before.

OSSIAN. If you truly desire reconciliation, father, hear him out. What you now offer him is mere mockery.

DIARMUID. The frown on your forehead crushes me. Be my guest. If you stay with me for a long time, perhaps your old love for me will return again to your bosom. Here under this roof we cannot tarry; you have been affronted here and I am not yet reconciled with my host. Come to my castle! Look, king, I lay on myself a heavy penance in order that I may pacify you. For the wrong that you are suffering I will lay a punishment on myself. After we are reconciled, entirely and completely reconciled, when your eyes are

once more bright, I will sail for Alba.* A brotherly people calls to us for help. Balor, king of the Fomorians, cruelly plagues them — that terrible Balor, king of the terrifying eyes, who by black magic turns men into stones. . . . Finn, I will engage Balor in battle; I shall not return for a long, long time to Erin. Do you wish me to depart and perhaps to fall in battle under the burden of the thought — that you, you, my dear, infinitely dear friend, still curse me deep in your soul? You cannot allow that! You will prove that it is otherwise!

FINN. You have moved me. Today, in very truth, you have the right to request much from me. Let it be as you say. I will come to your castle; I will be your guest. Then do you sail to Alba. Perchance I may long for your presence. Perchance, when you are far away, I shall again come to love you. Go!

DIARMUID. You are magnanimous, Finn! I know that I ask much, but you are generous. Come, Grainne, let us mount our horses and hurry home, where our guests will soon arrive. Farewell, Finn! Midac, Ossian, farewell to you all until we meet again! (*He hastens away with* GRAINNE.)

FINN. (*Looks around.*) Why are you all so deep in thought? Let us haste to the forest where the hunt awaits us! Then, after resting, we shall pay our visit. Verily this is a joyous life! . . .

(*All except* MIDAC *depart.*)

MIDAC. (*Gazes after* FINN.) He is as gloomy as a storm cloud and as dark as the grave. . . . It is difficult to make peace with him — and the cause of his anger is the smile of a maiden. And I, and I? . . . My poor father, your blood is not yet avenged, and how readily I promised reconciliation! (*He drops into a chair and hides his face.*)

(*The curtain falls.*)

ACT IV

A forest near DIARMUID'S *castle, which towers impressively in the distance, above the trees. Here and there, be-*

*Scotland.

tween the trees, the ocean can be seen. On one side is a crag from which a spring trickles. It is a clear autumn night. The sun is setting; its radiance, here and there, still gilds the tops of the trees, but is slowly fading.

Scene I

Grainne *and* Diarmuid *come in together from the direction of the castle.*

Diarmuid. Before the stars come out King Finn will be here. Go back now, Grainne; I will wait here. (*He seats himself on a boulder.*) Command them to light the piles of wood heaped on the mountain tops; they will gloriously light up the way for our guests. Will you come out again to the door of the house to meet us? You do not answer, Grainne; you are lost in thought.

Grainne. I am, Diarmuid.

Diarmuid. Are you thinking of your father, with whom we are not yet reconciled?

Grainne. No, he is good; he will easily be reconciled. Something else hovers in my mind.

Diarmuid. The departure to Alba.

Grainne. To part with you would be too great a sorrow — so I shall go with you. We shall return hither and be happy.

Diarmuid. Peace will be around us, peace will be in our hearts.

Grainne. How infinitely happy we shall be! (*She nestles close to him.*) I shall hardly be able to comprehend my happiness. Your house is now my house! I shall be with you until death, Diarmuid, here in these forests, the eternal rustling of which is like sweet music, so soothing, so full of longing. But no, more than in your house I dwell in your soul, for it has powerfully drawn unto itself my soul! Ah, how happy I am!

Diarmuid. Yet your eyes are wet with tears.

Grainne. Diarmuid, there is something like grief in the deepest depths of great bliss.

Diarmuid. You are trembling, Grainne.

GRAINNE. The wind rolling in from the sea made both me and the trees shiver.

DIARMUID. The sea breathes coldly, winter is not far away. Grainne, your mantle is too light; here, take mine. (*He hands her his mantle.*)

GRAINNE. What do I see! You have no weapon! Where is your sword?

DIARMUID. Why a weapon? I have come out to welcome guests.

GRAINNE. I do not trust Finn! Diarmuid, why have you no weapon?

DIARMUID. You do him great wrong!

GRAINNE. Diarmuid, look, I am trembling; it is not the frosty breath of the sea that shakes me. — I had a dream — an evil dream. —

DIARMUID. Did you again hear the sound of the harp from Tara? Child!

GRAINNE. You laugh, but you do not drive away my fright. In a dream I saw Finn, how he came to us; how he sat in our hall; how a thousand oaks on the knolls flamed in his honor, and their ruddy glow penetrated even into our hall. And he laughed and laughed, and he boasted of his weapons, and his smile was so grim. . . . You said to me: "Go, Grainne, bring me my famous sword." I went, and in the depths of the dark chamber your sword, the Moralltach, glimmered like a will-o'-the-wisp. With a trembling hand I took it from the post and closing my eyes I came back to you. On the threshold of the hall I paused behind the closed door! I looked at the Moralltach — the sword was bloody! Then I cried out, for in my soul I beheld, as one forebodes everything in a dream, that you were dead! And you *were* dead, Diarmuid! You lay so pale, so pale, and Finn stood above you and laughed grimly, and his eyes shone with his cursed love!

DIARMUID. But Grainne, that was only a dream.

GRAINNE. True, it was only a dream . . . But that does not prevent you from going back with me to the castle and girding on the Moralltach, your old, faithful sword. —

DIARMUID. Am I to be equipped for battle when I welcome a guest?

GRAINNE. If I could see at least a dagger at your belt! I will bring one to you.

DIARMUID. Go then to the house, Grainne. Fetch the dagger if you wish, but before you return with it Finn and I shall be already at the gate, and tonight after the feast we shall laugh together at your fears and at your dreams.

GRAINNE. So much the better, Diarmuid. (*She goes out.*)

SCENE II

DIARMUID. *Later* MIDAC.

DIARMUID. (*Gazes after her.*) How she hurries through the forest! Grainne! She does not hear. She has already disappeared. And I wish she were still here. . . . (*He looks around.*) The evening star has risen above the sea and its light is growing stronger. Finn cannot be far away.

MIDAC. (*Steps out of the thicket.*) Diarmuid!

DIARMUID. You here! You have come with Finn! Be as welcome as the sun! Your love for me is greater than your inherited, well-justified hatred! — O dear guest, what a sweet moment you have prepared for me!

MIDAC. I do not come as your guest. I will not enter under your roof.

DIARMUID. That bitterly disappoints my hope. Have you come hither to tell me coldly how I may pay you for your father's head?

MIDAC. So it is. That cannot surprise you.

DIARMUID. No. But I had thought that you would not hasten, that you would allow me some time to celebrate my reconciliation with King Finn. But you have hastened. You know that soon I take ship for Alba, and perchance that is why you hasten. The vessel lies already equipped, near at hand, there behind the trees. Midac, sail with me. I will protect you in battle; for you I will shed my blood. Perhaps I shall thereby redeem myself from the curse of your anger. Sail with me, Midac! Be my faithful comrade once more. — About the price of the head we shall readily agree.

MIDAC. Are you sure that our agreement will be so easy?

DIARMUID. I am, for I know that I shall consent to anything that you may demand. So tell me what you ask.

MIDAC. (*With determination.*) Grainne! . . . Why do you start? Why do you look at me as if a spectre had appeared before you?

DIARMUID. (*With a smile.*) I am foolish. It is all so simple; I did not understand you. What is it that you demand?

MIDAC. Grainne.

DIARMUID. (*Steps nearer to him.*) Midac, in the forest grow cursed, poisonous fruits; they strangely confuse the mind. You ate one of them on your way; your tongue speaks something whereof your reason knows not.

MIDAC. For the blood of my father I ask for Grainne. Nothing more, nothing less. Will you yield her to me? Say yes or no.

DIARMUID. You rave!

MIDAC. Say yes or no.

DIARMUID. No!

MIDAC. That I expected. That is good. You refuse to pay for the head the price that I ask. What, then, do you think will happen?

DIARMUID. I understand. You desire battle, Midac. You yourself shall settle the time and the place. Ah, Midac, you are hard! . . .

MIDAC. Judge not so, Diarmuid. Ah, what a long battle has been fought in my soul. Not my heart, but an obscure power drives me on. My sleep is a torture. I see my father every night, every night. As a sunbeam glides into the forest so his pale shade passes through the room to my bed; he hovers above my head and gazes at me. With a sob I stretch my hands out toward him and cry out in terror, for — horrible vision — he takes his severed head from his shoulders and with his hand he lifts it up by the hair, and light streams from it.— The staring eyes of the head roll, and light streams upon me from them as from a lamp. Diarmuid, my father refuses reconciliation, he rejects payment; therefore he put me on the trail from the very moment when King Cormac tried to reconcile me in Tara. I cannot act otherwise!

DIARMUID. (*Extends his hand.*) Here is my hand, Midac, as a proof that I understand you — wretched man! Then let there be battle! You cannot do otherwise. Yet give me time to accustom myself to the thought — that I must raise my sword against you.

MIDAC. You know not how you torture me — you know not what I swore before I knew the murderer.

DIARMUID. Vengeance? I know.

MIDAC. But of what sort, you cannot guess.

DIARMUID. Be firm, Midac, and do what you must do. But today be my guest. —

MIDAC. No. I will be firm, as you request; but I shall do now what I have to do.

DIARMUID. Ah, sometimes it has seemed to me that a more beautiful time will come; that hatred will no longer be inherited; that love, friendship, and all the sweetness that slumbers within the souls of men will then blaze up in full splendor, as on a summer morning flowers burst into bloom!

MIDAC. Alas, that time has not yet come. (*A horn is heard.*)

DIARMUID. King Finn approaches.

MIDAC. (*Aside.*) Then I must act quickly.

(*He steps closer to* DIARMUID.)

DIARMUID. From your eyes night threatens. What do you wish from me, Midac?

MIDAC. (*Thrusts a dagger into his heart.*) Your blood!

DIARMUID. (*Falls beside the spring.*) Ah, Midac, so this is what you swore to do! Oh, Grainne, your dagger will come too late! . . . (*He faints.*)

MIDAC. (*Kneels beside him.*) He is pale! He is dying! Cursed hour!

SCENE III

The same; FINN, OSCAR, OSSIAN, *the bodyguard with torches.*

FINN. (*Off stage.*) Dismount! Walk along the wide pathway here. Hallo! Light me in with your torches. (*He comes in.*) We are so near the castle, and as yet, no

one has come out to welcome us. I expected a more cordial host.

OSSIAN. My father, say that my sight is mistaken. Oh, horror, horror!

FINN. Whither look you, son? What terrible sight do you see?

OSSIAN. There lies a man bleeding; he is pale, he does not speak. —

OSCAR. It is Diarmuid himself, and Midac mourns over him.

OSSIAN. Midac, tell us: Who was so miserable, so base—?

MIDAC. (*Rising.*) I was neither miserable nor base. I did what it befitted me to do: naught but justice. He refused to pay me for the head — he could not. So I deprived him of life. His blood for my father's blood. That is the immemorial law.

OSSIAN. O ye eternal gods! My Diarmuid!

OSCAR. Grandfather, how your eyes shine with wild joy!

FINN. Yea, truly. Joy surges through all my veins! Pale and in the dust my enemy lies before me! I could shout for joy as if drunk with wine!

OSSIAN. Silence, old man, lest I forget that you gave me life.

OSCAR. Quiet! Diarmuid lives; he opens his eyes!

DIARMUID. (*Feebly.*) Finn?

FINN. He stands before you — and he laughs.

OSCAR. Grandfather! Grandfather!

DIARMUID. Finn, you laugh because you have come just at the right time. I am dying, yet you will save me — king of the beneficent, wonder-working hand.

FINN. How you deceive yourself!

MIDAC. Ah, old man, make haste! I performed my destructive duty — do you perform your saving duty.

OSCAR. Harken, with a clear voice a spring gurgles close by, and from the crag it hastens toward you.

DIARMUID. Help me!

FINN. (*With a wild laugh.*) Help you, you fool! I repay you today for that evening in Tara.

DIARMUID. Finn! Finn! Do you wish to be more cruel than the man who slew me? Is this your reconciliation?

FINN. For what do you reproach me? You extorted reconciliation from me, there in the house in Kerry. I have fulfilled your desire. I come to you as your guest. You perish by no fault of mine — now the score is even between us. Fate took it upon itself to avenge me when I had renounced vengeance. Not I, but Fate struck you down. Why should I raise you up? You are a stranger to my heart—despoiler of my honor, of my bride! You are pale; where now is the beauty of your face? Would that Grainne might see you, how you twist your distorted lips! Will your expiring eyes charm her?

DIARMUID. I am a stranger to your heart. Yes, your evil glance proclaims that even more than your words. Yet, Finn, remember how faithfully I once served you! I shrink from boasting; but remember only that evening in the house of Angus, when Cairbre swept fire into the banquet hall and surrounded the palace with that wild folk from Tara, Bregia, and Carmna, who thirsted to wreak vengeance on you for an ancient wrong. Who saved you then? Who ventured his life? That evening would you have refused me a sip of water from your wonder-working hand? You owe it to me, Finn!

FINN. That was long ago. Much nearer is that evening in Tara, when you disgraced my gray hair, when you exposed me to laughter and stole my wife — whom I loved.

DIARMUID. Old man, speak not of love.

FINN. Even though I be an old man I may speak of it! In the days of youth it is a plaything that can easily be replaced, but to me, an old man nearing the grave, it was a source of new life. — It has fled away and my life is fleeing with it. I am like a thirsty man whose water-jar you have broken. Within me nothing remains except the burning fire — of hatred.

DIARMUID. As a gift from her hand I received her love; I am not to blame, O king. Oh, hasten, weakness seizes me and my breath is failing. —

OSCAR. Shame on you, grandfather. I swear that I shall always hate you; and if you do not heal him, you yourself shall not leave here alive!

FINN. Ha, boy, are you threatening me?

OSCAR. (*Kneels.*) No. Forgive me. I embrace your knees; have pity; look, his life is ebbing.

FINN. Oh! (*Takes a step toward the spring.*)

OSSIAN. I thank you, father!

FINN. (*Stands still.*) I cannot! He took my Grainne — he did me wrong.

OSSIAN. Old man, old man! How many times did he battle for you? And do you forget his love for you? Hasten!

DIARMUID. Finn, have pity on my youth! Is the sun to rise in the morning above the forest and shine for everyone except for me, luckless man? Ah, king, do not cast me among the shades! How dearly I loved you, Finn! . . . Ah, you will regret your deed! Reproach will steal after you through all your life and delirious hands will tear you from the threshold of happiness and peace. . . . O Finn, reproach will sit at your hearth and stand at your bed like a specter. Finn, do you not regret to lose the strength in this arm of mine? Your son, your grandson, yea, perchance all Erin, will some day feel the need of it. They will call for it— and where will it be, ah!

FINN. (*Bends over the spring and plunges his hand into it.*) Your voice speaks to my heart — against my will — but yet —

DIARMUID. Be great and good — do not let me perish — death is approaching, Finn! Ah, beautiful life!

OSSIAN. Hasten, father! He is dying. (*Urges him on.*)

DIARMUID. Life! life! Ah, it flees like a shadow. . . . Oh, Grainne!

FINN. (*Rising.*) Grainne? That word has slain you! Perish!

DIARMUID. Grainne! (*Dies.*)

OSSIAN. (*Kneels.*) Dead! Oh, endless sorrow!

ALL. (*Except* FINN.) Woe!

OSCAR. The greatest hero in Erin has died, and the purest heart has ceased to beat. If only I, instead of you, Diarmuid, were lying here!

GRAINNE. (*Off stage.*) Diarmuid, where are you?

OSSIAN. Where is he? Who will answer that simple question? (*He throws his mantle over the body.*)

Scene IV

The same and Grainne.

Grainne. Diarmuid! . . . Welcome, King Finn! Where is my husband? Did you not meet him in the forest? You are all silent and lower your eyes. There is some terrible meaning here. Finn, where is Diarmuid? Speak, Ossian!

Ossian. Oh, do not ask . . . not me . . . that man there. . . (*He points to* Finn.)

Grainne. O king, I command you, speak!

Finn. (*Raises the mantle.*) Behold!

Grainne. Ah, a curse on the murderers! (*She falls on the body and kisses it.*)

Finn. Midac committed that bloody deed, not I.

Midac. Do you cast your guilt on my shoulders? Scarce can I bear the burden that fate places upon me. Your guilt is greater than mine.

Grainne. How pale your face is! And your heart does not beat even when I kiss you, kiss you. . . . Has your love faded away so soon? Here, dear head, rest on my bosom, not on a stone. . . . My heart is as deaf and as dead as his own. . . .

Ossian. Would that my tears could ease your grief!

Grainne. Tears? No . . . Ossian; look, how beautiful he is when the wind stirs his hair! 'Tis as if dark sunbeams waved above his brow. . . .

Finn. Raise the body. Carry him into the castle. (*The stage glows with a ruddy light.*) Ha, the fires flame; they were to welcome a guest. Now they glow for the burial of the host. Raise him!

Grainne. No, we shall remain together in the forest and shall listen to the voices of the night. (*Raises her head toward heaven.*) Oh, the evening star! He was like that star, he shone and set behind the forest. Heroes perish and the coward lives on.

Ossian. Come with me, Grainne. Time will soothe your grief.

Grainne. My grief is like the wind, which rages farther and farther and farther away, and can never cease to blow. What did I wish to tell you, Diarmuid? Ah, yes . . . I have

brought your weapon. . . . Your dagger came too late for you, but not for me. (*She stabs herself.*)

ALL. Ah, woe! Grainne!

GRAINNE. Oh, how cold! . . . how cold! . . . (*She sinks upon the body.*) My star that has perished! (*She dies.*)

MIDAC. Now, O king, our mutual crime is at an end. Oh, Diarmuid, oh, Grainne, may your rest be sweet! Death lurks everywhere — perchance it will soon find me. . . . Farewell, Finn, be happy if you can. (*He goes out.*)

OSSIAN. Farewell, father. I part with you forever. I shall sail to Alba in place of Diarmuid — and never again shall you see my face.

FINN. Son! Stop! That shall not be! The son of a king cannot give up his inheritance.

OSSIAN. But *I* am giving it up. I am leaving the shores of my fatherland and taking naught with me to Alba but my harp. There I shall sing to them of the old king in Erin who sits in the empty banquet hall — without a heart, for it was consumed in the flames of hatred.

OSCAR. Father, come! The gods be with thee, my native soil! (*They both start to go out.*)

FINN. Oscar! O son of my son! Stay! I am as an old tree which is rotting, which is shaken by the wind. My fame is fading. The gods are deserting me; I have renounced their gifts in madness, this hand is no longer bliss-giving. Verily my fate becomes dark! Who will share my grief with me, with an old man in a gloomy house? Who will comfort my old age? In the bitterness of death I shall be alone, alone!

OSCAR. (*Pauses.*) No! (*Points to the dead bodies.*) The memory of these bloody deeds will abide with you. (*He goes out, following* OSSIAN.)

FINN. Ah, heavy grief! (*Covers his face.*)

(*The curtain falls.*)

THE MYSTICISM OF WILLIAM BLAKE

A PSYCHOLOGICAL RE-EXAMINATION

By Benedict S. Alper

THE mounting market price of Blakeana, despite the times, is more than a reflection of the scarcity of his poetic and artistic works. It is an indication of a belated appreciation of all he gave to the world in his creative span of three score and ten. The world is re-evaluating his life and works. We are scanning his contributions anew in the light of our recent discoveries into the motivations of human thought and action, which he perceived so clearly and advocated so strenuously in a life which closed just over one hundred years ago.

Mysticism was the key not only to everything he wrote and painted, as Professor Damon has stated, but indeed the key to all the aspects of his life. And the way to this mysticism is best entered through an examination of his visions, the allegory of his artistic and poetic design, the stuff of which all his creations were made. "My visions are representations of what actually exists really and unchangeably," he said. And again, "Excuse my enthusiasm, or rather madness, for I am really drunk with intellectual vision whenever I take a pencil or graver in my hand, as I used to be in my youth."

His first vision is related by his wife: "You know, dear, the first time you saw God was when you were four years old, and he put his head to the window and set you a-screaming." One is reminded of William Ellery Leonard, who has related a similar incident which occurred after the important locomotive trauma, the basis of his later adult phobia. There is an important distinction between the two visions, however. In Blake's case there was no objective stimulus; it was simply an hallucination, a foreboding of the imaginary scenes which were later to fill his mind, his poetry

and his paintings. In Leonard's case there was a stimulus in the form of a cow's head which he mistook for the wrath of God coming upon him, a reminder of his infantile shock. For all we know there may have been a traumatic episode in Blake's early life which set him off on his later visionings, and yet there is not such a particularity of imagery accompanying this experience as there is in the scene which Leonard has described.

At the age of ten he came upon a tree filled with angels, and on another occasion saw them walking among the haymakers. In fact, most of his visions were of angels, and only once did Satan appear to him, "a horrible grim figure, scaly, speckled, very awful, stalking downstairs." His visions came to him chiefly at night, and some of them advised him well, as when the spirit of his beloved brother Robert appeared and directed him how to print pages of both words and illustrations from one plate, afterward tinting them in by hand. Thus St. Joseph revealed to him in his sleep how to mix his colors with diluted glue for greater permanence. And surely either these spirits or the visions were inspired, for we see, as a result of these suggestions, the most beautiful illuminated work since the Middle Ages.

We have here quoted most meagrely from a whole literature of visions which he has reported, to say nothing of those he generously poured into his poetry and drawings. It is at this point that we may attempt to apply the first explanations that modern psychological theory has to offer. That he was not entirely without some insight into the sources of his mental imagery may be gathered from the following: A lady once asked him where he thought he saw his visions and he replied, "Here, Madam," touching his forehead. A close study of his life and works leads to the belief that Blake's head actually was the source of these marvellous sights, that there was nothing hallucinatory in any of them. His was a case of trusting so strongly in the truth of what he thought, that he saw it symbolically expressed. He had no belief in the actual objective validity or existence of his visions, notwithstanding his statement that as he drew, his model appeared in front of him in space, moved its nose, or suddenly dropped away its chin. Con-

sider the following which shows he was aware of their psychogenic origin: "A spirit and a vision are not, as the modern philosopher supposes, a cloudy vapour or a nothing; they are organized and minutely articulated. The painter of this work asserts that all his imaginations appear to him infinitely more perfect and more minutely organized than anything seen by his mortal eye." He may, perhaps, have believed in the supernatural origin of his visions in his youth, when it is difficult to distinguish between reality and the world of phantasy, but in his maturity it is clear he understood their true nature as conscious mental creations.

It has been noted that the quality and number of his visions much increased after the death of his favorite brother, Robert. Blake watched at his bed for three whole days and nights until he died. At this moment he saw Robert's soul ascend through the ceiling, "clapping his hands with joy," a figure he is to use frequently in his later designs. Previous to this time he had suffered from a paucity of visionings, but from now on they were never to diminish again. In the conjuring up of these sights he relied greatly on the power of religion for some portion of his inspiration. Swinburne relates the following incident in this regard:

> A young artist, finding his invention flag during a whole fortnight, went to Blake, as was his wont, for some advice or comfort. He found him sitting at tea with his wife. He related his distress, how he felt deserted by the power of invention. To his astonishment, Blake turned to his wife suddenly and said: "It is just so with us for weeks together, when the visions forsake us. What do we do then, Kate?" To which she answered, "We kneel down and pray, Mr. Blake."

His views on imagination throw further light. Jerusalem, the ideal city, as it stood for God, stood also for this power, and one can well conjecture that in thus exerting his power he felt himself rendering divine service. "Natural objects always did and do weaken, deaden, and obliterate imagination in me," he said. And again, "Why are copies of Nature incorrect, while copies of imagination are correct? This is manifest to all." Here is expressed not only his reliance on the figments of his brain for his models, but his assumption that as he saw, so did all others see. He saw all things through a glass, but gloriously, rather than darkly. "I question not my corporeal eye," he writes,

"any more than I would question a window concerning a sight. I look through it, not with it." Imagination was part and parcel of his religion, it made up the "Body of God"; it was his constant source of inspiration, as a more traditional God has inspired others.

We have seen that he was a mystic, that as such he created pictures in word and line inspired by his visionings, that these visionings were almost always symbolically expressed. But the interpretation of this symbolism, like all great mystery of art, presents difficulties, and it is doubtful whether a complete glossary of his mystical terms or a solution of their many contradictions will ever be possible. Like the mathematician's, his list of symbols was limited, and he often had to use the same term twice without bothering to explain to others what was so clear to his own mind. And yet they must have some meaning. We may say of them what MacDougall has said of dreams, " . . . it would seem to me absurd to regard (them) as the products of merely chaotic jumbled brain currents; I have no doubt that they are allegorical constructions, however little confidence I may have in any particular interpretation."

Modern psychoanalysis, serving as a *Mittelstand* between the sympathetic interpretation of the poet and the clinical approach of the psychiatrist has much to offer for an understanding of this intricate imagery. There is much of Freud foreshadowed in Blake's work, but Jung provides in this instance, as in his therapeutics, a broader understanding.

For the Freudian there is abundant material. Orc, Blake's favorite, oft-repeated figure of Youth in Revolt, may easily be identified as his own temper raised to a literary symbol. Orc is the son of Los, poetry, and Enitharmon, inspiration, and as such turns towards his mother as he grows into manhood. There is here, surely, evidence in poetic form of a buried Oedipus complex arising from Blake's own Unconscious, an allegorical expression of his buried self:

> But when fourteen summers and winters had revolved over
> Their solemn habitation, Los beheld the ruddy boy
> Embracing his bright mother, and beheld malignant fires
> In his young eyes, discerning plain that Orc plotted his death.

There are many Freudian symbols, the "golden pin" and the "cave," the "serpent," all expressions of the flesh. There is mention, too, of the "cup" and the "wand." There is Rahab, standing for sexual license; Los, the spirit, representing the Ego, while Tirzah represents sexual repression; yet note that Blake charged Tirzah with weakness of desire, not strength of will. There is one poem, *The Defiled Sanctuary,* which may be taken to indicate Blake's disgust for the sexual act:

I saw a chapel all of gold
That none did dare to enter in
And many weeping stood without,
Weeping, mourning, worshipping.

I saw a serpent rise between
The white pillars of the door,
And he forced and forced and forced
Till he the golden hinges tore:

And along the pavement sweet,
Set with pearls and rubies bright,
All his shining length he drew,
Till upon the altar white

He vomited his poison out
On the bread and on the wine.
So I turned into a sty,
And laid me down among the swine.

The Freudian implications are certainly clear. Yet heed also Professor Damon's interpretation that the Chapel is the Church of God, which all wish to enter, but must stand without until the serpent, the Priest, has entered, and desecrated the eucharist with his hypocrisy.

His hatred of all restraint and order, his defiance of government and the status quo may show a tremendous consciousness of guilt, a demonstration of the thundering power of a Super Ego with whom he was contending. His insistence on forgiveness as the first credo in any religion may be an expression of his revolt against all those punishing and avenging powers in the world which to the psychoanalyst are demonstrations of the presence, even in the adult, of resentment against an incompletely outgrown father-image.

There is more to be gone into to uncover completely this symbolism, which may be taken as an expression of certain clear universal truths, despite the possibility that it is at the

same time a transmutation of his sexuality into verse. There is some presaging of Freud's doctrines in Blake's description of the conflict between "Tharmas," the body, and "Enion," the sex instinct, which so harasses the soul of man. From this conflict, as also from the struggle between "Urizen," reason, and "Luvah," the emotions, is born the poetic faculty and inspiration. Blake has stressed the necessity for self-expression and has gone one better than Freud when he said, "Sooner murder an infant in its cradle than nurse unacted desires." And again, "He who desires but acts not, breeds pestilence." He has referred to what we now call rationalization in his styling of Hypocrisy as the cloak of Reason.

The psychological approach to this imagery is further aided by the use of Jung's types and allegories. There is more than a striking resemblance between Blake's "Spectre" and "Emanation" and Jung's "Persona" and "Anima," respectively. There is a close analogy, which one discovered through poetic intuition and the other through analytic insight, between Blake's "Four Zoas," Urthona, Luvah, Urizen, and Tharmas — and Jung's four fundamental psychic functions — intuition, feeling, thinking and sensation. To the "Christians" and "Atheists" correspond Jung's Introverts and Extroverts. Both Jung and Blake place imagination at the core of the being, both stress the necessity for symbolism, both emphasize the value and importance of dreams, both teach that reason is a deceptive faculty, because the emotional side of self directs it. But the greatest value in using Jung's approach to an understanding of Blake lies in the former's concept of the "Archetypes" as the expression of innate, inborn tendencies to conceive and explain our world in terms of objects and principles. These "Archetypes" appear in all mythology, all folk lore, and especially in Blake's writings. Blake's "collective unconscious" has been especially fortunate in gathering, as it developed, the finest and highest types of allegorical figures. The conflicts that Blake describes as occurring in the human soul are the same as have troubled man since the dawn of time. These, surely, are Jung's "ancient, universal, and deep thoughts, the buried treasure of the past," which

Blake drew on to describe to the world the eternal verities, their inter-relationships and their effects on man. "It would be quite inappropriate to reduce the collective ideas to what is personal, and not only inappropriate, but even actually pernicious," says Jung.

The modern may well admire the enthusiasm with which Blake entertained and expressed his ideas. "The roadway of excess leads to the palace of wisdom." And one of his disciples wrote, in this vein, "Excess is the essential vivifying spirit, vital spark, embalming spice of the finest art . . . think only on excess, and only use medium to make excess more abundantly excessive." Here again Blake has divine example for his course of action: "Christ, being all virtue, acted from impulse, and not from rules." Expression, strong and unrestrained, was one of his most dominant doctrines; to be strongly moved and not express it was to breed poison. He has described this best in the two lines:

> Abstinence sows sand all over
> The ruddy limbs and flowing hair.

In this day when regimentation is more to be desired than great beauty, when restraint is desired within the ever-narrowing bounds of a strict social code, it is heartening to contemplate Blake's fire and his freshness. Eagerly as he defied the dicta of his times, so earnestly does his future, now present, turn back with new tools for the understanding of the teachings of this creative mystic.

EXCALIBUR

by Ralph Adams Cram

"Excalibur", of which the following section is a part, was written in the year 1893, and is now out of print. The author's intention at that time was to write a trilogy, doing in dramatic form for our own racial epic, something similar to what Richard Wagner had done in operatic form for the Teutonic epos. "Excalibur" was to be the first of the series. The work was not continued, and now never will be.

Camelot. The ramparts of Merlin's tower. Merlin is seated in the midst of the platform. Midnight.

Merlin.

How silent lie the purple fields of God
Above the troubled earth. Since time began,
When, by the fiat of Omnipotence,
The howling chaos, without form, and void,
Swelled to this awful vault, the hollow dome
That prisons us upon this little world
Has hung inexorable. Like a bird
That beats with futile wing against the roof,
The soul soars through the cavernous abyss
To smite impatient pinions 'gainst the sky
And falls back, vanquished. On the farther side
Of that impenetrable firmament
Lies Wisdom absolute, wherein the saints
And shining angels have a part with God.
Yet we that need so grievously the light
Of knowledge, were it but a slender ray
No larger than should filter through the chink
Of any little star, must live our lives
Unholpen, undirected.
What is this
That I have won of wisdom but the blind
And devious gropings of a creeping worm
Hid in the heavy earth? The world of men
He knows not, as I know not what is hid
Forever by that roof of adamant.
And yet, such learning as I win must serve

To make me master of these little men
Whereof I build a kingdom. Oh, how frail
The stones that I must work withal, how small
The craft that aids me, and when all is done
How unenduring is the fabric raised.

I may not think of this, but for the time
As other men, see that which lies to hand,
For wisdom works inaction in the blood
By showing forth the dread futility
Of what we do. How darkness chills the will
And halts the hand. Come, disenchanting flame,
Dispel my languor!

(*He kindles the brazier. Enter*: NIMUE.)

NIMUE.

Prithee, chide me not
That I have clomb with unfamiliar feet
Unto thy rocky fastness. Let me rest
Above the world with thee, a little space,
I will not hamper thee.

MERLIN.

Were I a boy
All flushed with ardours, I would think a dream
Encountered with me in some dusky pass
Of unsubstantial sleep.

NIMUE.

Why stare ye, sir,
And bend your solemn brows upon my face?
Is it so strange a thing to meet a maid
Within thy frowning stronghold?

MERLIN.

Wit ye well
Thou art the only lady of the court
That would foregather with the sorcerer
Upon his tower. Streightway give me word
Of that thou needest, for the night is old
And thou must lightly go.

NIMUE.

Dismiss me not!
The boon I crave leaves thee no poorer, Sir,
Yet may it make me rich.

MERLIN.

Ye lack the spell
To win unwilling love?

NIMUE.

'Tis soothly said;
My love returns to me with empty hands.

MERLIN.

I may not aid thee. Potions like me not,
Nor silly spells. Go thou to Morgan, girl,
That she may ease thee.

NIMUE.

Out upon the witch
That deals with pagan demons in the Mere!
I will not speak with her.

MERLIN.

Then thou art wise,
Yet shalt thou lack thy philtre.

NIMUE.

Better so
Than that I peril mine immortal soul
In most unchristian commerce with a witch.
I am content to couch me at thy feet
The while with potent hand thou dost control
The straying stars, compel the elements
That with unkindly malice hinder us
And let us from our goal. Deny me not,
Most mighty master.

MERLIN.

Nay, thou silly child,
Thy vigil gains scant comfort. What have I
To give thee, that am but a surly seer,
While thou art —

NIMUE.

But a woman! Say'st thou?
Nay, Merlin, I am more, for perfect love
Ennobles e'en a woman.

MERLIN.

What a thing
Is woman, then, without the gift of love,
That with it is but hell's ambassador.

NIMUE.

I cannot hear thee. Merlin, let thine eyes,
Aweary of their scanning of the stars,
Look less unkindly on me. Read my heart
And learn what I would tell thee.

MERLIN.

Mock me not!
I am no lusty knight. Love's apples grow
In other fields, not on the barren crest
Of Merlin's Tower. Lightly get thee hence,
I am aweary.

NIMUE.

Nay, I leave thee not.
Art thou forspent? I'll pillow thee in sleep
Upon my bosom. Art thou sad withal?
Then shall I make thee laugh for joy of life,
And cradle thee in dreams that shall dispel
The lurking visions of adversity.
My lord, my love, look deep into mine eyes
And see my secret!

(*Soft music.*)

MERLIN.

Dreams assail me, dreams
Of days that are not: dreams of laughing love,
And dreams of love that wept for very joy.
Why should I dream?

NIMUE.

I love thee, Merlin!

MERLIN.

Stay!
I heard a voice that spake an ancient tongue,
The which did say "I love thee."

NIMUE.

Lift thine eyes
And look upon my face!
(*The night slowly flushes with rosy light, and all the sky turns to a flowery pleasaunce.*)

MERLIN.

Who art thou?

NIMUE.

She
That loved thee long ago.

MERLIN.

I know thee not
And yet, — I love thee! —

NIMUE.

Crush me to thy breast,
Thou lord of all the world! Give me thy lips
And drink the wine of life that brimming high
Shall quench thine anguish!

MERLIN.

Dreams assail me, dreams
Of days that may be nevermore.

NIMUE.

My lord,
See how the forest opens for our feet
This day of June. It is the Land of Love,
Come follow, follow —
(*She mounts the battlements.* MERLIN *follows slowly.*)

MERLIN.

Dreams assail me, dreams —
That baffle me —

NIMUE.

Give me thy groping hand!
We two will lie beneath the little leaves
The while they whisper sleepy songs of love,
And noon melts into night.

MERLIN.

A mocking spell
Is over me: my heart has ceased to beat:
My brain is in disorder. Help me, God!
My craft is broken!
(*He makes the sign of the cross: the vision in the sky vanishes.*)
Damn thee, witch of hell!
I know thee now!

NIMUE.

Have mercy, master!

MERLIN.

Go!

(*He hurls her down from the battlements, then slowly descends and seats himself by the table.*)

How better am I than the least of these
Ignoble creatures that I make my pawns
Upon the board where I do play at chess
With destiny. Am I no more than they
That I should be beguiled of sorcery?
Merlin, thou art a wittol! Mend thy wits
Or England crumbles.
(*Enter* KING ARTHUR.)
Thou art welcome, king;
So like a cloud I find thee, changing form
With every little wind, unstable, frail,
I durst not count upon thee. Being come
I crave thy patience. I'll have speech with thee.

KING ARTHUR.

Meseems thou art ungentle in thy words
And scant of courtesy. I am thy king
While thou art — Merlin.

MERLIN.

Merlin am I still
When thou art crownless and a naked soul
Abashed before the Lord, if thou dost flout
The aid I offer thee.

KING ARTHUR.

Say on.

MERLIN.

Sir king,
I am thy servant if thou dost obey,
Thy master else. Before thee, face to face
I tell thee this. Exalt thy feeble will,
Cry scorn upon the burrowing sorcerer
And magnify thy royal majesty,
Thou shalt not balk me. I will make thee king
Despite thee.

KING ARTHUR.

Do I let thee from thy goal?
If thou hast any ground for chiding me,
If any way I fail of my devoir,
Name me the deed, nor stretch authority
Until it snap, with arrogant reproach.

MERLIN.

So be it. Arthur, look upon this scroll
Wherein is traced the circle of the skies
At thy nativity. In each its place
Are posited the planets and the stars,
The sun, the moon, the constellations, all
The fortunes and infortunes as they held
When thou didst see the light. Now mark them well.
For never stood the stars in this array
For any man before. So marvellous
And all unwonted is their strange design,
A word, a breath, a thought may tip the scale,
Make thee immortal, make thee infamous.
When thou art walking on the dizzy rim
Of fortune, that is like a naked sword
And dost thou marvel that I watch thee well
Set edgewise over hell?

KING ARTHUR.

Act thou thy part
As guardian of the State, if such thou art;
Oppose me not in mine. I am the king,
And royalty strikes deeper than the crown.
Give me thy council, aid me with thy lore,
But hold in mind I am no puppet king
Content with empty majesty. I reign!
And while the crown is mine I shame it not
By playing pupil to thy mastership.

MERLIN.

I hear Pendragon speaking through thy mouth
And am content, but only with thy words.
Act as thou speakest, king, and I am dumb,
But while thy words are grave thy deeds are wild
And wanton. Ruin crouches close at hand

Where thou dost walk, and for a paltry whim
Thou'dst barter England.

KING ARTHUR.

Name thy grievance, Sir!

MERLIN.

Did I not hold thee from thy doltishness
Thou'dst lightly make a queen of Guenever.

KING ARTHUR.

By God, I make her queen despite thy will!
This leaps the bounds of reason. Must I crawl
On supplicating belly to thy feet
And crave thy grace to wed with her I love?
I will not!

MERLIN.

Listen: In the seventh house,
Yea, in the cusp thereof, in square of Mars,
The Great Malefic, grim, implacable,
Frowned on thy birth, and therefore shalt thou swear
To have no part in love forevermore;
For if thou takest to thy throne a queen,
Were she as pure as flame, thou shalt descend
Into thy grave a cuckold, and I read,
Alas, too clearly, in thine evil stars,
That England is entangled in thy fall.

KING ARTHUR.

I know not why I do abide thy speech,
Thou foul-mouthed slanderer, nor hurl thee down
Incontinently from the battlements
For speaking thus of Lady Guenever.
I give my life in hostage for her faith,
Content thyself with that.

MERLIN.

Thou art o'er bold.
Dost thou not know that with a whispered word
I could weave round her such a subtle spell
That thou wouldst see her not forevermore?
No man wins aught of me by haughty words,
For as the sword leaps baffled from my breast
So threats fall from me.

KING ARTHUR.

Thou dost daunt me not.
Lay by thy magic for the quaking girls
That throng the Court. I marry Guenever!

MERLIN.

Not while I live.

KING ARTHUR.

Then shalt thou shortly die,
For, by God's Wounds, I will!

MERLIN.

Wait for the proof;
I have a hand in this. I made thee king,
And king I'll keep thee 'til the doleful day
When England totters, and Pendragon's seed
Shall slay Pendragon for Pendragon's lust.

KING ARTHUR.

Mock me not, Merlin, with an idle rune,
For magic is no medicine for love.
Within the ordered limits of thy sphere
Be thou my guide, but look ye leave them not,
For there is yet another province, meet
For other councillors, and there I bar thee, sir.
Molest me not, for love brooks no control
Of wisdom or of magic or of fear.

MERLIN.

Swear on thy knighthood and the Holy Cross
That thou wilt cast away all love and lust.

KING ARTHUR.

Lust will I cast away, but never love;
Who mocks thereat is damned for blasphemy.

MERLIN.

Who plays with either perils all things else.
I tell thee, boy, this kingdom is not won
Save by him only that shall thrust away
All thought of love. The brand Excalibur
Carves not a kingdom if the wielding arm
Is tethered to a maiden's silly heart,
And therefore I forbid thee.

KING ARTHUR.

Save thy words,

For here I act alone. Withhold thine aid
Since so it pleases thee. I call on God,
And He who gave me leave to live and love
Shall guard me.

MERLIN.

Go thy ways, thou silly fool!
I builded on a false and shifting sand
When I did build on thee. The hour is gone,
And once again shall England split with strife
Until the wrath of God comes hurling forth
To strike thee by the hand of thine own son,
For so the doom shall fall.

KING ARTHUR.

I know the rune
And heed it not, my life I leave with God,
And He shall take it when and how He will.
But if He call me not before the spring
Comes burgeoning o'er England, once again
Pendragon's seed shall sprout in virgin fields,
To reign when God shall cast me from the throne.
So, thou art answered.

MERLIN.

In such dolorous wise
That I am fain of death. I pray thee, go!
Nor seek me ever when thou art bested.
So splits the golden dream!

KING ARTHUR.

I will not go
In wrath and malice. Merlin, I must live
My life, not thine, and even as my soul
That I revere as God's ambassador
Commands me. Thou art withered with thy years
And may not know the majesty of love,
Therefore, my heart must be a sealéd book,
Clasped, clamped, and locked before thy failing sight,
Yet I may read it well, and in the words
I see the tracing of the hand of God.
By this I walk. I can no other thing.

(*Exit.*)

MERLIN.

How like my life is this forlorn abyss
Of empty air that rings me with a wall
Of unrelenting iron. All alone,
Unaided, unbefriended, I abide
In solemn isolation, toiling on
To build a nation of the headstrong boys
That feign man's grave estate. Why should I strive
To wrench incompetence to dignity
Against its will?
Fool! for that thou art wise
With lofty learning men know nothing of:
Thou art of them that rule the childish world.
Thou art the king.
Ye silent, baffling stars,
Give me your aid! How shall I win the cast,
Despite the headlong folly of the boy
I crowned with England's crown? From sore defeat
Shall I not win abundant victory?
That thing I do, but by what subtle means?

King Arthur weds with Guenever. I heard
Pendragon speaking, and I know the blood.
What follows after? King Leodegrance
Henceforth is England's vassal. Small reward
I find the fact, but — King Leodegrance!

Merlin, thou are assotted! Rouse thy wits
That are not used to such base treachery.
Queen Guenever? Aye, let her wear the crown,
And let the king be lapped in dalliance
If so he pleases. Out of Cameliard
The daughter of King Leodegrance shall bring
A dowry that will disenthrall the State,
Release it from dependence on the king,
And guard it with invincible defence.

So cometh victory from overthrow,
So wisdom matches folly. So I win
Dominion absolute. Leodegrance
Yields the Round Table into Arthur's hand!

Curtain.

PRAYERS

by Francis Jammes

Translated from the French

By John Heard

I.

Dear God, since all the world so bravely does its best,
Since, to the fair, old horses with their swollen knees
And oxen with low hanging heads go patiently,
Bless Thou the land; bless all who here find toil and rest.
Thou knowest that between here and the sky's blue line,
Between the shining forests and the rushing brook,
Grow fields of wheat and corn and many a twisted vine.
It's all so good; so like an ocean of good deeds
Which in the peaceful sunlight stretches on and on.
And all the little leaves move with the sun-warmed sap
And dance and gleam and sing in the still wood's lap.
So is it, God, Dear God; and my poor heart's athirst;
So full it is of love and tears 'tis well-nigh burst.
If in thy wisdom thus my pain is of avail,
I am content, so on this slope that humble vine
May gently bear its fruit under Thy sun divine.

Dear God, give Thou to others the joys that passed me by;
And let all lovers, strolling on and whispering low,
Oblivious of the wagon's creak and of the cry
The cattle vendor makes, drink their deep kiss and know
The ecstasy of walking, thigh pressed close to thigh.
Let the old mongrel watch dogs at the country inn
Eat of their favorite food their fill, then go to sleep
In the shade. And let the long flocks of slow moving sheep
Nibble the green young bitter grapes along the road.
But hear me, God: Forget me if Thou thinkest wise;
I'll still be glad, since I can hear up in the skies
The little birds, as in a cage of kindness, sing
And their glad songs rain down on me like showers in Spring.

II.

I pray you, God, contrive that she who'll be my wife
May humble be, and sweet and, most of all, my friend;
That, holding each the other's hand, we go to rest;
That round her neck, and somewhat hidden in her breast,
She wear a silver chain with a medal at its end;
And that her skin may be more smooth, more golden warm
Than that of ripened plums at summer's sultry end;
That in her soul she keep that gentle purity
To make us smile in silence in each other's arms.
Let her be very strong, and let her guard my soul
As o'er a slumbering flow'r stands guard the honey bee.
And grant that on the day when I shall die she may
Kiss shut mine eyes, and then no other prayer shall tell
Than, kneeling by my bed, her tight clasped hands may pray,
When sorrow stifles mind and heart and speech as well.

III.

Only my grief is left me, and I would no more.
Faithful she's been to me, and faithful is she still.
Should I then wish her ill when in the days of yore,
When from below my soul was crushing my heart still,
My grief was sitting close beside me all the while?
O, Sorrow, now at last I've come to know your worth
Since I am sure you'll never leave me on this earth.

I know your beauty now, the beauty of mere being
Like that of those who never left the fireside,
So cold and black and burned quite dead, that is my heart,
O Sorrow mine, what sweetheart could be sweet as you?
For well I know that on the day when I must die
You will be there beside me in my bed, O Pain,
Seeking to win your way into my heart again.

IV.

I pray you God, Dear God, let me go pluck a star;
That might, perhaps, bring solace to my battered heart.
And yet, you do not wish that I should pluck a star;
You do not wish it, and, what's more, you do not wish

That in this world I have of happiness my part.
But, God, I shall not say a word; I'll not complain
Even to myself; no bitterness shall fill my heart;
I'll lie as lies a wounded bird between two rocks.

But tell me, God, is yonder star I wish for, Death?
If so, please give it me, as one might give a coin
To some poor hungry beggar in a roadside ditch.
Dear God, I'm stumbling like an overburdened ass . . .
When you take back what once you've given it's hard to bear,
Yes, hard; and through one's heart one feels a cold wind pass,
A wind that's bleak and terrible and full of fear.
Do you know how I may be cured of this my hurt?

Remember, God, when I was still a little chap
I carried holly sprigs to make your manger gay,
And Mother gently set the candlesticks to rights.
Please give me now a little of what I've given you,
And if you think that it might cure my aching heart,
Won't you, Dear God, give me that star I want so much?
I need it so, to lay it on my heart to-night —
My heart is cold and empty and there is no light.

V.

Hither and yon, as the chance breeze blows, the butterflies
Flit like rose petals which the little children toss
In your direction at the Procession of the Cross.
Dear God, it's early morning, and the morning prayer
Rises toward you with the crowing of the earliest cock;
With the butterflies, and the sound of workmen breaking rock.
Under the plane-trees, with their crowns of green asway,
When the soil is parched and cracked in the July heat, one hears
Th' invisible crickets chirp and chirp and sing all day
Their humble praise of Your divine Omnipotence.
The red-winged black-bird in the reeds beside the stream
Is moved to whistle, tries, and does not dare.
It can not tell the cause of its uneasiness,
But from the reed on which it's perched, with suddenness
It springs, and skimming straight and low is no more there.

Today, as yesterday, as many days before,
Dear God, softly and gently life begins once more.
Let me, I beg, live as these butterflies have done,
And like the workmen, and the crickets in the sun,
And like the blackbirds in the shadows hidden away;
Please let me live my life as simply as I may.

VI.

All hope is gone from me, dear God; I am resigned;
My life sweeps on as sweeps the skyline of the hills.
Darkness shuts down on me as night falls on the fields
When, like a failing lamp, the sun sinks down behind.
I cannot see within me now. It's like the night
Which blots the gleaners' deep blue silhouette from sight
The gleaners of my thoughts in the green field of my soul.
I wish that I might be like th' first fresh hour of dawn
When in the silver dew the rabbits prink and preen.
But, dear my God, all I can see is grief ahead
Which, as it bows the patient farm-hand, bows my head —
The farm-hand who between his long-horned oxen plods
While his slow harrow jogs behind and breaks the clods.
I am forspent, but with a very gentle heart
In the noon-day heat, high on the hillside I look down
Upon the woods which are as glistening green-black stains
That like huge leaves of silence stretch across the plains.
Dear God, I might perhaps, have greater faith in you
If you took from my heart that something which is there,
That is like a dark red sky when thunder's in the air.
And, God, were you to take me to a little church
Built in a leafy tree-top, high above the ground,
I might find Faith there strong as marble and as sound.
And blue jays flitting by would make a sky of song
Above the silent forest's shade, now hot, now chill,
While from fresh springs, as from a font, they'd drink their fill.
Then in the dusk a little bell would call to prayer;
And also in the morning, when the tomtits drink the dew.
But in that little church no young girls will be there;
Only old folk and angels, and small children too.
High in the leafy branches it will be like heaven;

There'll be no knowledge there; there'll be no thinking even.
But sometimes in the night the old watch-dog will bark
Because he smells some stranger wandering in the dark.
There in the woods, dear God, may Faith in You be given.

VII.

Dear God, preserve the life of this their little child
As you preserve a blade of grass from chilling winds.
What difference can it make to You? Will You not spare
The Mother grief? Take not this little life away
As if You did not have the choice of yea and nay.
If You will let the baby live, he will grow strong
And next year when the sun shines on Your festival
He'll bring You roses. God, You're kind; You do not change
The rosy glow on children's cheeks to Death's grim blue,
Except to take them to a better place, where You
Can put the little ones back in their mothers' arms.
Will You not do so now? But if the hour has struck,
Before this baby dies, remember, God, that You
Have lived, and ever will, close to Your Mother's side.

LESS FAMILIAR QUOTATIONS

A happy audacity of expression may pass. It is bad taste to repeat it. — *George Meredith.*

A mere scholar is a mere ass. — *English Proverb.*

It makes people happy to despise what they haven't got. — *John Galsworthy.*

Let us be thankful for the fools. But for them the rest of us could not succeed. — *Mark Twain.*

Enthusiasm is the mainspring of productiveness. — *M. L. Wilson.*

Philosophy is the finding of bad reasons for what one believes by instinct. — *Aldous Huxley.*

One fool can ask more questions in a minute than twelve wise men can answer in an hour. — *Lenin.*

TWO POEMS

By B. Cyril Windeler

ELMENTETA

I saw her face where the silver boughs
Dipped to the mirror of the silent pool;
And laughingly I raised my eyes,
Half in pity then (that I still should seek
With age on the brow and hollow cheek)
That I still should seek or expect to find
The sylvan mood in a form like this
With the lips half curved, as a flower, to kiss,
And the lids half closed over pale blue eyes
That called in a waking dream to me:
"Long ago you were of my company".

That I still should find, that I still should see . . .
But she moved not. Still as my breath was she.
Only a leaf from a branch near by
Fell to the water lazily.
And I heard the notes of the tiny stream
Weaving the spell that a man may hear
When the dust of cities
And the knowledge won
And what "they say" matters . . . disappear.

As the rushes bend so she bent to me,
With her hand on the trunk of the silver tree,
And she softly whispered:
"Speak to me".
Then bowed, as a maiden may, her head
Who would wish, yet not wish, it had not been said.

Slowly her foot, where the dead leaf lay,
Stretched to the mirror of the silent pool.
Broken! The ripples came my way,
And I held my breath
As they reached my side
For she looked again through her wistful eyes. —
Now a youth may live where an old man dies —

And a youth may see . . .
But she spoke again
In a voice where joy was edged with pain.
"Won't you speak to me?"

Could I tell her then of the world I knew,
Of the thoughts we bear
With their heavy load?
Could I speak of the torn earth's aching need,
And of man weighed down in the chains of greed
Where the iron shackles rust in fear
As his schemes and plans, in their triumph, pave
A noisy road to a silent grave?

Ev'ry thought would sear as the furnaced lead.
Ev'ry thought would break through the silken thread
Spun by the noon from the silver tree
That fell as our hallowed canopy.
But the echo lingered:
"Speak to me."

Nay, I cannot tell (and the bruise sank deep)
Of the ways of men and their restless sleep.
But a song I will bring thee
To hear, if it please thee,
To bear away with thee
Thou wistful thing.
For a song may soothe when the heart grows old
And the words may linger
When the earth is cold.

I will take my reed from the rushes' bed
Where the dawn rose, flushed from the kiss of Spring.
I will tune my pipe and will make your song
On the curvèd page of an emerald wave
With notes of foam, and a sea bird's wing
To beat its rhythm to the list'ning air,
Leaving the shadowed counterpoint
For the tides to carry where the tide-rips sing
As the Nereides comb their sea-green hair
And the reeds on Ladon's banks forbear
Their murmuring.

But again she turned and bowed her head
With an arm half raised.
Did she shed a tear?
How should I know? Uncertainty,
Ever thy barb must pierce me now.
Yet I think, had she shed a tear for me,
I could ne'er have strayed from that silent pool,
That the veil had torn with a broken cry
And the tents and banners of the builders' race
Would have burned — to light my argosy.
Yet, might I pass to comfort her?
And yet be forgiven? . . .
The arc of heaven
Bends when a child would hide his face.

"I thought you would speak of love," she said,
"Where the lilac boughs, as a drift of snow,
Bending their petaled whiteness low,
Do worship love."
Then I stretched my arms to her frail, fair form:
"Speak of love then; yes — only love."
She had gone.

DRESDEN CHINA

Shepherdess — whate'er your name
Constant ever, smile and curtsey —
Hath a china Cupid's aim
Struck your shepherd man so truly
That he bows with hand to heart?
Was it there, O Shepherdess,
Was it there, in naughtiness,
You directed,
You directed,
You directed love's swift dart?

On the flow'r-sprent bank one spies
Now unheeded, mute for ever,
Pipes whose tones in shy surprise,
Maybe wooed you from your bower
One forgotten summer's day.

Was it thus, O Shepherd man,
With a tune o'erheard from Pan,
So beguiling,
So beguiling,
You entranced the maid away?

Grieve ye not, though still apart;
Bow and curtsey each to other,
Learn in this the truest art
Love can teach or love discover.
Hold the glazèd hour of bliss —
Shepherd, pretty Shepherdess;
Herein lies your happiness:
Love shall never,
Love shall never
Fuse and crumble in a kiss.

There are few of us who are strong enough to make circumstances serve us. — *Somerset Maugham.*

Life is changeless in unending change. — *John Masefield.*

Have ability without enthusiasm and you have a rifle without a bullet. — *Lord Dewar.*

Women are meant to be loved, not to be understood. — *Oscar Wilde.*

A broken friendship may be soldered, but will never be sound. — *English Proverb.*

A difference of taste in jokes is a great strain on the affections. — *George Eliot.*

A gentleman is one who puts a little more into everything in life than he takes out. — *G. K. Chesterton.*

The whole history of civilization is strewn with creeds and institutions which were invaluable at first, and deadly afterward. — *Walter Bagehot.*

The greatest pleasure in life is doing what people say you cannot do. — *Walter Bagehot.*

Levellers wish to level *down* as far as themselves; but they can not bear levelling *up* to themselves. — *Samuel Johnson.*

Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel. — *Samuel Johnson.*

SEVEN POEMS AND TRANSLATIONS

By Eleanor L. Turnbull

COMPANIONSHIP

Autumnal glories painted in the forest,
The graceful lines of trees 'gainst wintry skies,
The high serenity of hills
Beneath a glorious pageantry of cloud,
And fragrant pine boughs under a burning sun,
Rolling fields of billowy grain,
And boom of sea round rocks that shut earth's tumult out —
When beauty fills the soul with ecstasy,
The spirit longs to feel
Within a kindred heart the thrill.
A touch, a look, a silence — that is all —
Ecstasy perfected in companionship.

THE DAYS ARE LENGTHENING NOW

Translated from the French of
La Comtesse de Noailles

The days are lengthening now, long lingers on the light.
Deep quiet reigns, and hushed the busy din of day.
The trees in wonder at the twilight's long delay,
Stand dreaming, still awake in the soft mystic night.

In golden light, chestnuts their honeyed scent exhale,
The air is heavy grown with this their fragrance rare;
We may no movement make, to breathe we scarce may dare,
Lest the too fragile sleep of these sweet perfumes fail.

Low murmurings faintly reach us from the distant town . . .
The pollen dust is scattered by the rustling breeze,
Too long has it delayed on the blossoming trees,
Across the quiet pathway it comes sifting down.

Day by day have we gazed on this familiar sight
And often have we wandered down this well-worn way;
Yet something in our lives is changed for us for aye,
Our souls will ne'er again be as they are tonight.

FLUTES OF AUTUMN

Translated from the French of
ANDRE FERDINAND HEROLD, 1865—

The sad flutes of autumn quiver
And sigh in the evening air,
And the wet trees seem to shiver
While the skies sob out their prayer.

The bright flowers die and wither
And the sweet birds all take wing.
They fly, I know not whither;
Perchance towards another spring.

And you, all trembling and frail,
My soul, the dim alleys thread.
You seek, O traveler pale,
Songs that forever are fled.

The songs that charmed us awhile
With autumn will not return.
Shall I see once more that smile
In your eyes where the tears now burn?

THE OLD DOG

Translated from the French of
ABEL BONNARD, 1883 — ,

Wild with the joy of life, not long ago,
He scratched in the shrubbery, jumped the hedge-row,
And greeted us with frenzied bounds: today
His faithful soul in shades of night doth stray,
While dozing by the fireside he lies.
At our approach, he lifts his misty eyes
To gaze in ours, seeking to know our will,
And if our friendly love surrounds him still.

GOLDEN VERSE

Translated from the French of
FERNAND GREGH, 1873 — ,

Lovely is life, happy or sad; accept it so,
With soul by beauty of the world intoxicate;
All life is beautiful, and death beyond we know,
Through pathos can its beauty but accentuate.

Accept of joy or grief with heart unfaltering,
Which, after morning light, pale eve may not amaze;
For there is naught more fair than April's blossoming,
If not the wind-tossed leaf with autumn's gold ablaze.

THE CANTICLE OF THE SUN

ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI
(1182 — 1221)
Translated from the Italian

O Most High, Omnipotent, Good Lord; Thine be the praise, the glory and the honor; to Thee be every blessing. To Thee alone, Most Highest, are they due, and there is no man worthy to speak of Thee.

Be praised, O Lord, with all Thy creatures, especially my lord Brother Sun, who gives the day, and by whom Thou showest light. He is beautiful and shining with great splendor; of Thee, Most Highest, he is the symbol.

Be praised, O Lord, for Sister Moon and the stars; Thou hast formed them in the heavens, clear, precious and beautiful.

Be praised, O Lord, for Brother Wind and for air and cloud, for fair and for all weather by which Thou givest Thy creatures sustenance.

Be praised, O Lord, for Sister Water, the which is so useful, humble, precious and chaste.

Be praised, O Lord, for Brother Fire, by which Thou lightest up the night. He is beautiful and gay, vigorous and strong.

Be praised, O Lord, for our Sister Mother Earth, the which supports and nourishes us and produces diverse fruits, with brilliant flowers and grass.

Be praised, O Lord, for those, who for love of Thee forgive, who bear sickness and tribulation; blesséd those who in peace shall endure, for by Thee, Most High, they shall be crowned.

Be praised, O Lord, for our Sister Death of the Body, from the which no man living may escape; woe to them who shall die in mortal sin and blesséd those who shall be found in Thy most holy will, for the second death shall work them no harm.

Give praises and blessing and render thanks to my Lord, and serve Him with great humility.

SONNET CXIII FROM *"L'OLIVE"*

By Joachim du Bellay, 1525 - 1560,

Translated by

Eleanor L. Turnbull

If of our life the span be not a day
Within eternity, if time his flight
Stay not, revolving hopeless, day and night,
If all things living be of death the prey,
O my imprisoned soul, where lies thy way,
Wherefore in darkness dost thou so delight?
Thy wings were formed to bear thee in thy flight
To shining regions of eternal day.
There is the good to which all men aspire,
There is the peace which is our hearts' desire,
There, too, is love and there is pleasure's store.
There, O my soul, guided to heaven's height,
Thou mayest learn to know the ideal light:
The beauty that in this world I adore.

SEVEN POEMS

By MILDRED BOIE

OUT OF SNOW

Snow soft falling falling years of hours
Fills my hands and icicles my heart,
Color - blinds my eyes with ashen showers;

Snow still falling stoppingly athwart
Warmth of blood, and drowning breath with white,
Quenches quick each hope at fiery start,

Until I fear all light is snow, and sight
Never to come in death of drowning snow,
Snow so blinding white, so heavy light.

And then he comes, he swims in swirling snow
Not like a drowning body — like a man
Who dives for joy, stroking the waves aglow,

Parting the billowed depths of snow with fan-
Spread arms, rippling the bottom of the sea
Of snow with laughter, taking my cold hand

And rising, I not drowning now, to see
The dancing snow all rainbow bright in sky
Of sun, to feel my heart grow hot in me,

My body's blood now tingling, running high,
Reviving frozen mind, with all the snow
Of winter now not able to terrify

The seeds of spirit locked in ice until they know
Out of the winter spring, and comfort out of snow.

NOT THE SNOW

What makes the world so still today,
And all its bells sound far away?

Is it the snow?
Is it the snow?

What whispers at the window now
And breaks the youngest willow bough?

Is it the snow?
Is it the snow?

What seals my breath with seals of frost
And moves my hand til they are crossed?
What shuts and locks my eyes to light?
What covers me with icy white?

Is it the snow?
Is it
The snow?
The snow?

WINTER CAN GO

Now, heart, let down your triple brass —
The earth undoes its white cuirass
And swells beneath the waking grass;
Winter can go, winter can pass.

The seed is breaking from its shard,
And every tree and bush is starred
With points of green against the hard
Brown shell of bark; let down your guard.

Let go your frozen hold on fear;
Glaciers and snow can disappear,
All storms pass on, and cold winds veer,
And spring can come, has come, is here.

THIS COUNTRY

Do you know where we are going?
Do you know what roadless land we enter
By our own road, road our feet make going,
By our own light lighting the way invisible?
In a sharing joy at fruit trees singing,
At the sudden fire under the snow,
We are running, mouths now wordless with laughter,
We are hearing, ears adazzle, this music,
We are looking each away from other
At us both ahead, and part of this country.
Do you know what country this is?

The mountains, beautiful in snow, now rise
Before us out of early meadows; they —
Do you know what mountains?
— Our desires rise in blood and heart of us.
Naming them not, we blindly take the foothills;
We climb untired, unremembering
Whatever climbs we separate made before.
Do you know remembering?
I have been here before, in this same land
Still perilous; and I remembering
Tremble, but not for myself alone — for you.
Do you fear remembering?
Beauty is more important now than fear;
This is a fearful country, full of terror —
Let us take this wild volcano peak with running.
Do you feel this hot white mountain?

On one of these mountains we will find the fire
Bellowed for us, the storm that broods intent
On us two coming, waiting to burn and beat.
On one of these mountains we will come to chasm
Lightning-struck and stretched for us, where winds

Plowing your life and angry winds of mine
Will fight together, we together there
In cyclone center, we unable to do,
To go, no ledge for both to hold, no cave
For hiding, nothing but icy and separate rocks,
Or the jump together into wind and fire.
Ah then if falter comes, if fear, how black
The sudden pouncing sky, how slippery rocks,
How desolate the country —
Do you know what awful land?
— all the flowers
Torture to eyes and heart in blight of beauty,
Beauty no more for us, for our spring time
Eternally darkened, done to death by fear.

On one of these mountains we will have to part,
Or leap and burn, be beaten into earth.
Do you fear that awful land?

You think of you; I know my knowing now;
I know the strength's no longer here in hands
To hold a separate rock above a storm;
This will no longer can outblaze a fire
Alone, or twist back separate ledge to safety.
It is all the way, or stop here, go away,
Find you another entrance, other feet
And eyes to run with up to precipice.
Do you know another way?

This is no land for playing in, no land
For one who died there once and came back dead;
For one can die one time or twice, be thrown to earth
From mountain, come alive—changed—once or twice,
But not again: again would stay all dead.
Peril is good; to drink it off at a toss
Is good, if pledge is drunk for fiery life,
But I will drink no drink for separate death.
Do you know, do you understand?

Do you know where we are going?
It is all the way, or go away

And go now, or go to the end of together,
With our feet our own, our eyes our own,
But all running toward the same hot peaks
Where the same bright winds will push us both
To the same sharp precipice and fire,
To the same bright coming - through to the same won life
In the country we enter roadless, making
Our own road, our light, our joy and peril,
Our own land to settle in, this beautiful country
Where we are going.

TO THE NEXT LOVE

Love me but little, and that not yet;
Withdraw your quickening hand; forget
The moment and foresee the year
Lest this clean hour foreshadow fear.
No gesturing love, no sight, no word,
For words deride what I have heard
And must forget to hear again;
All signs recut the scars of pain,
Scratching the heart with emptiness,
And new love points the fears that press
The life from what love imaged there
Before you came, before despair
Had glazed the changeful world for me
With tarnished unreality.
Love me but little; love me but let
Me perish quite and quite forget
Living and loving, lest from the earth
You seek to quicken, and from the birth
Of love, I feel in my laboring heart
Death, with an other tremor start.

KLEPTOMANIAC

Although I own no house or field,
I get the fruits that gardens yield.
A cheerful thief, I cut the edge
Of honesty at every hedge,
Robbing the lilacs of their load
Of perfume spigots by the road.
When no one's up, I look around
And see what loam the bluebells found
To claim for spreading roots, what shade
The apple trees and cherries made
For lilies of the valley, what
New vine turns green against the hot
South wall, and how the tulips glow
Like bulbs incased in wax below
The palmy forests of the ferns,
The thickets where azalea burns.
And when the day is early yet
The grass is likely to forget
My footsteps pressing down the dew
In silver patterns of a shoe
If I should trespass there to taste
The mocking scent that iris waste
Within their ragged purple spires.
Who thieves in gardens never tires
Of leaning on a fence to see
What looks twice beautiful if he
Need never spade nor weed nor stone
But loves it for itself alone.

LAND'S END

Bending the rain and rocking cliffs, the wind
Under the steady cannons of the sea,
The last wind thunders up and cuts the rind
Of coast to the quick, houseless, without tree.

The rock is cleft, but is not cleft to hide
The one who walks, not to a fiery goal,
Not on the thorny path, narrow or wide,
But on this edge, the land's end of the soul.